

Amor Aeternus

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Amor Aeternus

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Summary

Ludwig, the son of a Germanic Tribe leader, is offered a chance to visit the famous city of Rome, where he would fall in great acquaintance and love with the youngest son of the emperor, Feliciano.

Notes

I thought of changing the names to something that would be more appropriate of the time, but I thought it would take away their familiarity. The research I did was little, so many things could be inaccurate and I apologize greatly if it offends anyone by any chance. If you have any information, I would love that you shared it.

I will try to update this perhaps maybe once a week, I have a lot of things to write and may not be as quick. Never the less, I hope you all enjoy it.

Chapter 1

It was the silence that he needed. Well, not entire full silence. He could still hear clearly the running of a near stream, infinite amount of birds still chirping, the wind that blew across the trees and grass that was munched in the deer's mouth. It was calming, the true nature of the setting. The deer could continue to eat without a worry, trusting that there was nothing else but this peace. It was the state Ludwig wanted him in, unaware of the bow he aimed. He had sharpened the head well, practically shinning under the few rays of light that managed to get through the bushes and tall trees. He had made some new inscriptions on it for luck on his hunt, proud of how intricate the runes had come out.

No matter the design of his weapon! He should keep his eyes on his prey.

The unsuspecting deer continued on, Ludwig having the perfect shot, beginning to extend the string, making sure his elbow didn't make any contact with leaves or bark. He had a harder grip and was finally ready to let the arrow pierce.

There will be a great dinner for his household tonight!

The crunching of leaves was enough for the deer to move, for it to stop and move from the target Ludwig had mentally placed.

Where did that come from? Who was here? Even he was as curious as the deer.

"Ludwig!" And now the deer was off, running deeper into the woods, away from any reach and even chance Ludwig had to killing it. He groaned in desperation, standing from his hiding position, quite a surprise to the boy that was looking for him.

"Ludwig!" He called again, coming closer to him, slow and weary of the steps he took.

Rocks of large sizes covered the path, and any slip could have him hitting his head hard or breaking a leg. Despite how he was mad at the fact that he lost his prey because of this young boy, he was still watchful of him, making sure that every step he took was safe as he came closer.

"What have you come here to tell me? And why are you here alone?"

"Mother sent me to see if you were all right and if you've gotten..." from his vacant sides, and the only item in his hand being a bow, he did not get the meat. He saddened, he actually loved the meat they roasted. Ludwig could have gotten it if he hadn't had this interruption, but he wasn't going to vocally say it, he didn't want the boy feeling at fault.

"I'll go get us some fish from the river." He decided.

It wasn't what he was asked to get, and from the disgusted look on the boy's face, what he even wanted, but it was quick to get and bringing something was better than coming empty handed.

"Come," he simply told him, moving about the well-known rode, making sure the boy was following him. He was still too young to know the woods well, and surely his father hadn't taken him out yet for his first hunt to know the directions on which to go.

He took out some fabrics from his bag and decided to use this to place the fish once they were caught. He let the boy hold it by the banks, while Ludwig fished them one by one with easy skill, having the pouch full by then, enough for the household. He wrapped the top with a string, pulling it to lay over his shoulder with ease, the boy staring up at him with a glint of wonder since for him it was starting to become heavy. He sometimes envied how fit Ludwig was, how tall and even intimidating, how he could scare off invading tribes just by his mere stare or force.

"To the village then," he declared, seeing as he was done for the day and the sun was beginning to come lower in the sky.

The boy tried to get even closer to him. With the coming darkness he was bound to get scared. His older brothers had gone on with stories about what were in the woods at dark and he refused to stay and see. At least he had Ludwig...who honestly did not believe in such stories and had several times stayed in the woods at dark to know that there was in fact nothing but maybe some harmless animals. He kept reminding him that as they continued their way, not taking too long to meet with their village. Some of his people were still walking about, finishing some of their last duties for their day before returning to their houses, where dinner was to be shared and then hopefully sleep. Many made way for him, short bows or greetings. He paid no mind, but maybe small waves as he quickened to the near end of the village, where his own home was located. It was the largest of all, what his people though was deserving of someone like him. Ludwig sometimes though this place could work better as a sort of dining hall for everybody instead of his home, but never the less, it was the home he had come to know and his place for food and rest.

The boy ran off to his mother who was just preparing some things in the home when he came rushing forward, telling her about his small little adventure of getting Ludwig alone, how he was safe and had been a good fetcher. She smiled and congratulated him, facing to Ludwig to have him hand in the fish he had just gotten.

"I thought you were getting us deer."

"It ran off," he simply said before heading to his small quarter to place his things, maybe work on organizing some of the swords or beginning with the inscriptions of that shield his father had brought him from Gaul.

The woman set off to cooking, the smell of the food even reaching Ludwig's nostrils even away from the closeness of what they considered the kitchen. She had called for food and everyone that was working in the back, or the front, or simply anyone who lived there, made appearance and crowded along the long wooden table where their food was presented. Once everyone was there, they began to eat, Ludwig merely focusing on his food as the table conversed about their day. No one really paid much attention to him, so he didn't pay attention back, just finishing with his own fish, ready to stand and settle to sleep for the night.

"Now, about Aldrich's return?"

His father had written some time ago that he would be returning sometime this week. He had been away for three months already and in his last message he seemed quite eager to come back already. The household just hoped to make him feel welcomed when he did. Ludwig felt compelled to stay and see in what he could help.

She assigned duties on the cleaning, of food, of drinks, of getting items for their rituals, prayers, even gifts if they could. He was surprised that she didn't give him anything to do, finishing and shoeing them off to sleep. He was the only one who yet remained in the table, his fingers tapping against the table and hoping for Helga to notice him. Picking the things they all left behind, she cleaned around him paying not much mind. Ludwig decided to help her, adding to the pile she had in her hands.

"You don't have to Ludwig, just go rest for now, you'll need it for tomorrow."

"What exactly am I doing tomorrow?" He still refused to leave.

"Nothing dear, just dress yourself in those nice tunics and be presentable for your father. Let us work on the rest, you'll be busy enough with hearing his stories." Ah yes, that was true.

It was almost tradition to give space to the both of them for their conversations. Everyone knew of Ludwig's interest of things outside of the village, many times himself wishing to go along with his father. But with his brother fighting along with other tribe members to get more land, someone of the ruling family had to stay and make sure that their main village was doing well. He did not mind it, he enjoyed being there for his people and doing what he can to protect them, but he had always been curious of everything outside these forests, to learn of bigger ones, more people and the knowledge that was to be acquired out there. That's why his conversations with his father and the places he had gone to was so important, because it was probably the only glimpses he had to see them.

The coming morning had been an uproar. Never had he seen his village fret like this. They were usually calm and collected for all kinds of situations, even when neighboring tribes tried to attack them or when one of their dogs went missing and they had to search all throughout the day for them. It was odd to see his tribe so worried over someone that in the end...would probably not really care over all these small things. He just hoped to see his tribe safe.

As per a sort of 'order' from Helga, Ludwig had worn his nice tunic for the day, a bright blue one with a green belt, a medallion amber with the symbol of a wolf, a simple pair of pants and his usual boots. It was odd for the villagers to see him without his bulky furs, metallic accessories, capes, and even weapons, replaced instead by something so colorful and simple. Didn't suit him at all, but it was the traditional to wear when the village seemed to be in a feast.

Everything was done for now, decorated in heavy flowers, everyone in their best dresses, plates full of food and tables for everyone to feast together. Horses and carriages could be heard then, hurriedly pacing across their dirt roads.

Must be him.

They all quickened and tried to finish what they were doing, men banging drums almost to the tune of the approaching animals that held their leader. Ludwig was pushed to the front of it all, so his father could greet him first as soon as he arrived.

Finally they appeared at the base of the small hill they were placed upon. Aldrich was accompanied by two other men from this very tribe, their families already jumping and clapping. His father, at the very front, wore his usual stoic expression, even as wind and dirt blew across his face, his long blond hair flowing behind as majestically as ever still. Behind them they trailed a cart, the items inside covered by skin, surely all their gifts or items from their travels.

As they finally arrived to their entrance, they halted, along with the beating of drums, yet the clapping and excitement continued between their people. They moved, giving them space to get down, as well as for any family members to come and embrace the other two. Ludwig didn't move towards him like the others did, still awaiting in his place as Aldrich took his ever slow pace to come, his villagers leaving him a clear space as he moved, although they greeted and smiled at him in greetings. He raised his arms to them, but it seem half-heartedly as he continued onward. He was then facing his youngest son, there at his footsteps. They really didn't kiss or hug, all Aldrich did was place a gentle hand on his shoulder, and a smile, glowing now under this afternoon sun.

"You are well," he said, Ludwig nodding, moving to the sides, as if trying to hide from all the eyes that were now on them.

Aldrich turned to them, raising his hand this time as a symbol for all of them to fall silent. "It indeed brings me joy to see my village still as safe and that you are all this happy and cheering in celebration. My son has surely done a good job in watching all of you." He turned to him, and Ludwig had to fake a small smile while the attention was on him. He didn't think he did much. Yes he watched and guarded, but nothing of omens had come to get them.

"My travels this time brought me to our other brother tribes, to the empire, across the alps, in provinces like Gaul and even Italia." They all wondered in such names, Ludwig himself even, a great interest shown in his eyes that he couldn't hide.

"This time, I had managed to even make it to the capital of the Empire, Rome." Now that had managed to even take breaths away in the small crowd, and Ludwig's attention was clearly taken, in such interest that when Aldrich turned to him, it reminded him so much of the young little boy he used to watch over in the past.

"After the treacherous journey, for now I want to enjoy a rest and even a feast. Let us continue until our slumber overcomes us." They all roared, and while they were occupied in their noises, Aldrich took Ludwig's shoulder once again and lead him out of the crowd, forward to their home, already stories exchanged while their people sang, dance and ate.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Also, headcannon human name for Rome is Augustus (Thanks deValier), so yeah, when they're talking about the emperor, is not...the actual first emperor of Rome Augustus, but Hetalia's Rome. Felt the need to clarify just in case.

“Alfnod was trying too hard to convince them. I was at the verge of simply admitting the truth for him, apologize and hopefully the guards wouldn't be so harsh with us.”

Despite the late night, the village still remained as festive. Children were running about, men were huddled in food and drinks, women cleaning or in their own circles, talking and watching over the children. Aldrich and Ludwig shared a table in a private corner, for the conversation only to be heard between them. They had barely moved from the table and were deeply set in their conversation, nothing even of passing distracting them.

“The wind was strong that day, so sadly the cover had been blown, and what we had brought had been revealed to them.” It was the type of thing that could have the entire village roaring in laughter, but Ludwig only gave but a short grin, taking a sip from his alcohol as Aldrich did his own.

“Did they still let you pass to Ticinum?”

“They did, but with watchful eyes on us all the time. Not at all pleasant. Several times they had the guards on us for any small thing that might seem treacherous.” Another sip he took. “We had to cut our stay short because of it.”

“Did you get mints though?”

Aldrich smiled, taking a small bag from one of the pouches he held in his belt and throwing it to the table. Ludwig opened it to reveal the leaves, already a refreshing air, even if one so small.

“We even got some seeds. Hopefully we can plant them here.” His eyes gazed to the area that they were expecting to grow them.

Ludwig then grew nervous to ask him his next question, his hands intertwined in the table to hold, biting his lips, his mind still finding the right words he could say without sounding so desperate. He always though he did with this specific topic. Many had told him so. Aldrich noticed his hesitation, something that he had learned to spot in both his sons. He got more comfortable in his chair, his gaze now completely on Ludwig, expecting him to come out with whatever was worrying him.

"Rome," he finally said, "how was it?" And he grew more confident, a begging in his eyes that even made his father chuckle, not understanding why Ludwig would feel so worried to say it.

His fascination with the empire was no secret to himself, and he was quite excited to tell him what he had experienced. He leaned closer, his voice down to a whisper, like a secret that was to remain only between them. "As grand as you think it is."

That light that arose in his eyes, one of those few moments that Aldrich could tell that it was what his son wanted to hear. Only part of it though, he knew he wanted more information than a compliment like that.

"It's big. The size of our village could be an equivalent to parts of their buildings."

Ludwig found himself looking around their village. Despite its small size, it was what he knew, thus he considered it large for what it was. To know that there was something much larger just perked his interest even more and it slightly intimidated him.

"Their architecture was unbelievable, beautiful, every part of your eyes taking something unthinkable. Polish white and bronze marble that stood higher than even the trees around us. With designs, bends, arches, columns, and domes that showcased their incredible talent in art. Ah their art, one could stare forever at a single wall or statue, finding a new detail each time. We always questioned how they could make something so exact, and people were so used to it that they passed by without a care unless they were studying it or offering certain buildings prayers. People flooded and made the city the more active. Merchants, feasts, games, soldiers, gladiators, different challenges to prove their strength and skill, belittling ours honestly. The guards couldn't keep their eyes on us with so much commotion. We even lost the assigned ones we got after only a couple of hours. We even saw animals that I never knew existed, traded among them all across from different parts of the empire. It is rich, my son, rich not just in wealth, but just about everything. Food so easily found and handed, fabrics so soft, our sleeping arrangements, probably the best rest I've ever had. One again I say, Ludwig, it is as grand as you think it is."

One could say, with the look in his boy's eyes, that he was in love. They would probably ask him who the woman was. No one was bound to believe that it was excitement over a city that he had heard so much about, that he had dreamed and had yearned to visit ever since the first time his father had sat him down on his lap and told him as he just did.

There was more to say, so much more, so much he could go into detail that would leave them there the whole night, but there were other matters to discuss in such a beautiful starry night as this when he was to give him great news.

"While I was there..." his drink was done, only but a small amount that he enjoyed swiveling around in the cup. "I met with an old friend, who is now in a position I never thought I would meet him again." He placed the cup on the table, board with his little game for now, and Ludwig found it added suspense. "He's the emperor," he said without a care, like he was talking about any other position in their village.

Ludwig had choked on his drink, accidentally letting his cup drop to the floor, which in turn got many eyes looking. He waited for the others to continue with their chatter before he leaned much closer, hoping his father could see how serious this was and how he expected him to be more quiet about it.

“How in the world did you meet the emperor?” Another question that Aldrich had no problem answering, leaning just as close, when suspecting the last stares from his people.

“Many years ago, when I was about your age, the emperor had just been but a guard at the wall, at a time when it was common for many bandits to try and make their way into the empire in brute force. He was well known for all parts of the wall for his great leadership in stopping these attacks, there were even rumors that he had taken a group of six single handedly. I didn’t really believe in such a thing, so when my father had given me the mission on getting some items from a village over the wall, I went ahead without much of a worry. Because of the constant attacks, most of these soldiers were paranoid and on alert, so when I had come to pass, they thought I was another bandit. They held me hostage in one of the watch towers and didn’t let me go out for days. Augustus was in charge of watching me and we used the time mostly to talk. After I was released, Augustus and I would meet by the walls, to exchange items or just talk as we had in the watchtower. Sooner or later, I guess you could say we became good friends.” He sounded regretful about it, but a later chuckle proved that it was indeed what their relationship was.

“But around the time I started being with your mother, he was sent off to Rome. Apparently even the emperor at the time had heard of his skill and knowledge when it came to politics and adopted him into his family in hopes that he would take his place in the throne upon his death. We maintained contact with letters, but they became less until there came a point I didn’t receive anything from him again. Last I heard was his engagement to a Greek princess.” Even in his common serious expression, Ludwig could tell the hurt and the sort of betrayal of losing contact with someone he began to consider of good friendship.

“He never really told me about his new position. I assumed he got promoted to a general, so when I met him in the Pantheon, never I expected I would meet him as the great Emperor Augustus, in his purple trabea, surrounded in senators who looked at me as if I was the lowest of commoners. It was even embarrassing Ludwig.” He even leaned his head down in his hands, hair falling to his sides, hoping he could rub out the memory. “And yet, Augustus invited me over to the palace of all places, got me dressed and even my men in the softest of silks I’ve ever felt, perfect for the weather of the city I have to admit. He presented us with dinner and even music, even a tour around the palace where we spoke of lost years.” It was then that he took out a small scroll, pushing it close to Ludwig.

“He has two sons of his own as well, his wife died shortly after giving birth to the second one. I had the privilege of meeting his eldest, Lovino, who in my opinion looks and acts a lot like his father.. a much worst temper though.” He rolled his eyes, his memory of his loud voice echoing across the palace, waking everybody in it. Not at all pleasant. “His youngest, I could not meet, Augustus refused to let me, but he is to turn eighteen shortly and a feast will be held in Rome for his coming of age.” He pointed over to the scroll, which Ludwig opened, to reveal an invitation for three to the very feast he spoke about. With the date coming soon, his father would have to leave again and once again he will be left behind to watch over the

village. Yet Aldrich had been insisting that Ludwig opened it, his eyes remaining on Ludwig as he expected...something. Ludwig remained with his own stoic expression, indifferent to the invitation.

“So you’re leaving soon to Rome for the celebration.” Disappointment was evident in his voice.

“Yes, I am, but the invitation requires I bring two other men with me. I was hoping to take Gilbert, but since he is not here yet from his battles, I will have to take Roderich with me.”

Roderich? His cousin who could barely even hold any of the weapons, that when the village worked he remained in the shadows hoping for the workers to bring him food and water, who got lost on his first hunting trip, who refused to use any of their cloaks or tunics unless they were the richest from the empire, and his father decided that he should go through the excruciating trip to Rome? Of course he felt betrayed. Why give the honor to a spoiled man like him? He gazed at him from his spot and he was currently on his own table, drinking his own drink while he participated in conversation with the young women of the village.

“And whose the other man you wish to take?” Probably one of the other two men he had taken the last trip.

“You, son.”

He thought it was his mind who made up the image in front of him.

“Ludwig, I decided on taking you this time on the trip to Rome.”

His father was actually saying this, he was offering for once to take him.

“You...want me to go?” He needed to be sure, his voice trembling afraid that the chance could be taken away so easily.

“Of course, Augustus insisted on meeting my own children, and since Gilbert can’t, well, another member of the family could suffice.” That explains why he decided on Roderich. But wait...it would mean meeting the emperor as well. He...would meet the emperor. He could have fainted on the spot, not sure how he could deal with being in the presence of someone so powerful.

“What about the village?” He managed to think of.

“I’ll leave my brother Korbin in charge until we return,” he assured. “You’ve watched the village enough times already, come with me this time and you’ll get the chance you’ve wanted so much.”

How could he refuse? How could he hold back from such a chance? Aldrich could already sense his acceptance. He did not even have to hear it to know.

“We’ll leave in three days. We’ll use this time to supply and get ready.” He stood then, ready to spend some time with other villagers. “Depending on the trip, maybe I’ll suit you ready to take the leadership of the village and the rest of our tribes. We’ll find you a suitable wife and

you will bring forth a heir.” And he had left, not knowing on the sudden stress Ludwig had felt at his words.

The prospect of going to Rome at least distracted him enough to not think about those duties, standing forward from his table and thinking it a good time to head to rest.

Roderich had actually been quite ecstatic to be given the chance to go, even deciding to help Aldrich and Ludwig with their preparations for the trip. It was in that process that Aldrich told Roderich of what he expected from Ludwig on the trip to then bestow him as King of the united tribes. So when Ludwig and Roderich were in the forest looking for some herbs, rocks, wood and other materials, Roderich found it best to speak about this to him, in the loneliness away from the village.

“King, huh?” He began, not knowing yet how Ludwig could feel about this.

At first Ludwig seemed rather confused, picking just then a branch that held berries they could eat for the day. With the reminder, the weight came back again...the dread, the impending force of much larger responsibilities than what he knew, the life he was expected to have. His mind could have gone on if Roderich hadn’t asked him again.

“Oh yeah...he told you about it,” he finally answered, moving to another bush.

“He’ll soon enough tell it to the whole village.” How Ludwig wish he didn’t. “How are you feeling about it?” And once again silence. It was enough of a response for Roderich.

“I am the heir, it is something I expected and I will be willing to take if my father deems me worthy.”

“Are you really? You’re not nervous?”

“I am, but it’s only normal. I’m actually quite confident, just didn’t expect it so soon.” By now they had enough items, and Ludwig found it well to return to the village.

“You are of age and have been tested by watching over the village by yourself ever since you were a teenager.” Roderich pointed out. “There is nothing too soon, and I assure you it is of perfect time and you are ready. The hard part will be getting a wife and hoping for male heirs.” That was one thing that was making this unfavorable. He didn’t speak much about it and hoped they both remained silent until they got to the village.

He had no desire of such a thing. He rather much deal with the dogs of the village then with a child of his own, and a wife just didn’t seem as appealing as other villagers made it seem. Yes, there were excellent women in his village to choose from. Strong, hardworking and beautiful, but none had really attracted him enough in such a way to wed, and he pretty much hoped he could rule by himself. His father and his older brother would probably refuse to, and in the end, they will choose one for him and he would not be able to go against it. But he had Rome to distract him, a trip that seemed like the last of his liberties before he will be turned king.

With much anticipation, the day had finally arrived. The carriage with their things had everything they would need, two good horses were chosen and all that was missing were the three travelers, who were wishing their goodbyes and setting some last duties before they headed off.

Helga had given them medallions for luck and begged for Wuotan to grant them safety. She was the last farewell Ludwig had wished, already taking one of the horses, his father the other, Roderich settling with having a seat in the carriage. With the whole village there to witness, they settled off. Ludwig only gave them but a last single wave of goodbye before setting his gaze to the now continuing front.

The forests here were familiar, he had been here, hunted and knew them well, but soon enough the trees and hills changed and Ludwig could see he was not home anymore. Aldrich then lead them, knowing the way well, pointing to each new different thing and explaining as much as he could of what he knew. His son was of course interested, taking every single word and breath. His nephew on the other hand, was close to falling asleep. He did not really care about battles or legends or myths of every leaf out there, he just hoped to wake up to Rome the next time. But the trip to the city was not at all easy and it would take them many more days to get there.

They met with other villages and one of them had offered them stay for one night. They continued through dense and small forests, valleys and fields that extended infinitely but gave them an amazing breeze, between high hills and mountains that had left Roderich and Ludwig amazed, never thinking they could meet such tall ones. They passed the more treacherous Alps, one night staying in one side and then another to the more new side. Beautiful landscapes and lakes had them stopping, for them to bathe and drink before they continued down.

The villages they began to meet...well...more like cities began to present themselves, a preview to what they could expect in Rome. Already Ludwig was impressed by these cities, so populous and with structures he never thought possible. Many times he had his hands extended to touch every wall, every figure and design, making sure if it was indeed real. In the inn they had stayed, he couldn't sleep, from the window gazing to the city, the hills that extended in the distance, the fauna and view worth his late night gaze exploration.

They were so close to the main city, already meeting many of the more famous roads, overhearing some people who had just left Rome. Ludwig's grip on the reigns of his horse had become tighter, a way that his anticipation was showed.

He met with other hills, villages and large houses in marble and stone that made the scene the much more picturesque. And in a single turn, that had caught him by surprise, it was there, seen from a distance in a glowing light. Arriving in the still early afternoon was the best lighting to see it in, like it was still in his dreams. So breathless he was that he couldn't find it in him to let his horse go faster, Roderich and Aldrich moving away without noticing. Ludwig did not care if they would arrive first to the city and forget about him, because this moment, he wanted to remember it well, and this view, he wanted it to be forever in his mind, all in his grip to take before he would come closer, experience it as any Roman would.

“Ludwig!” His father had called, noticing how far behind he was.

Why would he waste his time here though? In the outskirts when he could be inside.

Seeing as he was done, he pushed for the horse to catch up to them. They were soon to enter.

Chapter 3

A long line awaited them as they reached one of the gates, guards inspecting the travelers that came. Aldrich noticed it was heavier than the last time he came, surely because of the coming feast for the prince. They checked everything, even the men's pockets, the inside of the vases some people brought. Nothing was left out of the sight of the guards. Any heavy weapons were taken to another building for them to pick up once they left the city and if any poison was brought, they down right refused to let them enter.

Roderich, Aldrich and Ludwig had nothing to fear. They had brought some shields, swords, and bows, but that was mostly for if they found any problems on the trip. They really did not mind if they took them, they could go back to them. What mattered was getting into the city and finding the place that Augustus had reserved for them to stay.

Finally, it had been their turn, the guards quite surprised to see men from so up north, impression in their glances as they searched through them. As expected, their weapons were taken, but other than that, they were allowed in. Since their carriage was rather small, they let it enter the city even in daylight, advising them on how to get to the building they were to stay.

He was there, he was finally here, met finally with its people, buildings towering high, the dirt and dust that arose not enough to hide its beauty. Aldrich said that this was the poorest part of the city and Ludwig could not see it, it was still so much more than his little village, their words forgotten as he let his eyes to explore.

The buildings that provided housing here were all formed in different ways, each showcasing a new form. It was well used, people coming in and out, carrying each different items like pottery and wool, or men simply heading out for a stroll. From windows people stared into the city, a form of relaxation, to get fresh air, to clean, to even decorate with curtains and tapestries, granting color and uniqueness to each room. Then there were those who peeked out to stare at the newcomers or anything that was going about in the city. It was the prince's birthday after all and even the commoners were excited over the feel of festivity that was sure to come that night.

Soon enough the atmosphere began to change and they were coming to a richer district. Trees and different plants grew, with fountains, stone paved roads, and the fabrics of the clothing here seemed more elaborated, the people walking with more of a grace. Roderich paid well attention, envying their walk, their jewelry, the fabrics that swayed much better than the ones his uncle had brought him.

The temples appeared then, statues which had Ludwig stopping in his tracks, to the point that Roderich had to try and pull him with his moving uncle, who would continue his pace even without them.

Aldrich had found their inn, about to announce it to his son and nephew, only to see they had disappeared. He had panicked, but luckily they were catching up through the crowds, waving

and apologizing for their sudden leave. Apparently Ludwig distracted himself with a simple wall that held the painted scene of a battle in the coliseum. Aldrich had told them that they would be enough time in Rome for them to see whatever they wished, but for now they should focus on settling in their inn and getting ready for the feast.

Aldrich had dealt with offering some papers Augustus had given him to present to the inn keeper and leading their way to their assigned room. It was much better than the last place he had stayed in he would admit. Walls were decorated in fine colors and design, small, but it was just the amount of space they needed, three beds, three small tables, and windows witnessing an inner garden of the inn, rich curtains to cover if anything.

If any of their people were here, they would think this of kings, but Aldrich and Ludwig had not ever been treated with such luxuries, and they were of royalty back in their tribes.

Once everything was set and ready, they began with their changing. The feast was surely to begin soon, the sun was to set and Augustus said it would start soon after it, when the first stars spread across the sky. On his trips, Aldrich had managed to get Roderich and Ludwig a new assortment of clothing for this visit, plainly Germanic of course, with the usual symbols, heavy fur garments and boots. Ludwig much preferred this than the simpler and colorful ones that Helga usually made him wear. Roderich on the other hand, hated them, made him look much smaller than what he was. But in Rome, they wanted to make clear their origins, and Aldrich and Ludwig succeeded well in so as they made their way to the palace. They were obvious, different and even standing out. It grabbed the eyes of many, who never really had the chance to see people far from over the Rhine River. They felt rather confident, even dignified as they joined a crowd made up of the richest members of the city, many of their best soldiers and fighters, and of course, positions of power. Guards lead people to their assigned spots, where they were to witness the beginning of the festivity. They got somewhere at the very front, giving Ludwig a clear view of the palace. It was large, extending on either side almost infinitely, pillars standing high, windows and doors that could lead to hundreds of different things to see. It was decorated with red fabrics and flags for the occasion. Imperial it stood, showing indeed that the members inside were of the highest power in the continent, what they thought were those chosen by the very gods.

A lot of people were crowded around a figure that Ludwig could not identify. Guards were constantly around making sure that no harm came to this specific person, yet that didn't stop him from coming into crowds, welcoming and chatting with the people he had invited to come. Another person stood by his side, much smaller, not really offering his talking, but maybe some grunted greetings. As they came closer, they became more evident, and from the solar crown on one of their heads, long tunic, the purple trabea, plus other golden accessories, this was the roman emperor.

Ludwig could feel his knees trembles, and as he greeted the group right next to them, he knew that soon enough they would get their own greetings. He settled his breaths, and remained standing straight, hands on his back, eyes focused and serious.

The emperor's eyes then met with Aldrich's, his smile for once genuine as he rushed forward to him, grabbing his hand and shaking it eagerly, different from the fast and nonchalant ones he had been given to everyone else.

“You came!” He said, on the verge of shouting it in joy.

Aldrich even bowed, which earned a roll of the eyes for Augustus, immediately raising him up after he was done.

“Is the inn to your liking? I would have gotten you a room in the palace, but we had more visitors than we were expecting.”

“It is enough Augustus, no need to fret.”

“If any problems arise, just make haste here and I will have someone fix it. How about the trip?” and they went on in a conversation about the journey, one that even bore Roderich, Ludwig and Lovino.

It was a huff from the young prince that reminded Augustus of Aldrich’s guest.

“And these are your sons?” He finally acknowledge their presence and for a moment Ludwig’s breath hitched.

“Not quite, this is one of my nephews, Roderich,” he introduced first, Roderich offering his hand and Augustus taking it in his own greet.

“And this is my youngest son, Ludwig.” And now the attention was fully on him, Ludwig at such a loss that he extended his hand so quickly that he had almost hit the emperor in the process.

Augustus moved back, chuckling but taking his hand to shake as well. “Easy there,” he smiled and gave them the same words of welcome.

He gazed strongly at Ludwig, moving close, clearly examining him. “It’s true what you said Aldrich, he’s a replica of yourself.” He laughed and Ludwig just stood there awkwardly, all words missing, not sure how to react to that.

It was a comparison he knew of, so he didn’t really mind it, but what do you do when the emperor tells you that instead? Augustus still continued to stare at him, his eyes never really stopping his exploring, until he once again met his eyes.

“You have a strong built, good posture, tall, everything I like in my soldiers. Do you do some training?”

“I practice with my swords and bows constantly, sir.” He admit it rather quickly, like it was a trained answer.

He nodded, quiet proud for someone he had just met. “Keep at it then, boy.” He patted his back, wishing him indeed luck on his continuous training and that hopefully one day he’d put all those things to test.

“Rome offers many places to train, mostly for our soldiers and guards, but you’ll fit right in. They’ll even help you in new techniques, I insist you go before you leave in your stay.”

“Will do, sir.”

“All right, now I’ll introduce my eldest, Lovino.” He pushed him forward, much to his annoyance.

“Pleased.” Both Roderich and Ludwig answered, giving their own bow.

He didn’t really answer or do anything, just grunted something under his breath. When Ludwig met eyes with him, he was glaring, hatred so obvious that Ludwig didn’t know how to respond. Luckily, a servant had just called for Augustus, something do with some last touches before the ceremony officially began.

“We must get going, enjoy the night my friends. I hope we have time to speak some more.” With a last wave he left them, Lovino following behind and not leaving even a glance.

Ludwig had fallen in ease, his breathing becoming normal, even hunching, his posture to the ground as he tried to calm himself. Aldrich and Roderich of course looked worried, thinking quickly that Ludwig had gotten sick, at the worst of times really. But quickly, after a couple of calming breaths, Ludwig was back to normal, standing straight as he was earlier and now Roderich and Aldrich were just confused. Never mind this, the feast would soon begin, and their eyes should stare at the entrance of the palace, the tall stairs, from where surely the prince would descend soon enough.

Female servants were all placing themselves on either side of the stairs, making a line down, holding tall feathered ornaments to decorate his welcome. Males held flutes, bucinas, tubas, and tympanums, who would play once their emperor gave the sign. A priest was by Augustus’s sides, holding the necessary items for the blessing, a plate to put his Bulla, his new toga, and new golden crown. The crowd was becoming heavier, and many guards were sent to the backs so no others could come in and fill in the small plaza. The sun by now was out, the moon clear in the dark sky along with the coming new stars.

It was finally time.

Augustus went up the stairs, at least half way, at an enough height for everyone to see him. He pointed to the instrument players, who played a small little song to capture the crowd’s attention. It worked fully for soon enough the crowd fell silent, Ludwig mostly focused on the music, beautiful and completely different from anything he had ever heard. With another sign from Augustus, it had stopped, left away in an echo that Ludwig wanted back.

“On a night much like this one, Helena had brought to me another son, a bright and joyous little child we named Feliciano. He has solely stayed in the palace, focused on his teachings, preparing him slowly for his first outing out of the palace and into our city, where he would learn and grow to become a man and continue on, along with his brother, to bring forward the honor of our family. Feliciano is fluent in Latin and Greek, he has read the best works of our literature, seeks his prayers to Venus in our temple, he plays the cithara, filling his area exquisitely with the sound, he has painted even a whole hall in our palace in his art, a majesty they are, to us and everyone who ventures those floors. I’m proud to call him my son, and I am now pleased to introduce him to my empire.” And with another sign, music began, and everyone looked up to the stairs, expecting this prodigy to finally be seen by everyone in the

city. But as the music continued, as the servants stood still, and as they waited, no figure ever came down.

"I present, my son, Feliciano," he called again, hoping that he just hadn't heard, but yet no one was coming. "Feliciano!" He called again, much stricter this time. The awaited prince never made the steps down. Augustus groaned, clearly angry.

A servant looked above the entrance...and nowhere could they spot him, not even in the spot he was assigned to wait until he was given the word. She nodded her negative to the emperor, and to his embarrassment, he had to go up there and see for himself. It was just as they told him, it was empty, with no presence since most of the servants were out working on the ceremony.

"Feliciano!" He began to call on as he walked down the entrance hall, opening windows, doors and curtains, and yet no sign of him. "Feliciano!" By now his voice had become anxious, a sign for the guards to move from the plaza and start searching the palace for the prince. Even Lovino, who grew just as worried, left his earlier position to find him along with many servants. Other guards were sent back to search through the very crowds for him, sending away many of the visitors, who by now had whispered among the crowd with the very worries, rumors going about on how he was probably kidnapped or assassinated, they could just be awaiting news of his death. Not standing to hear such things, the guards began ushering them all to their homes or their inns, saying that news of the prince would be given tomorrow and another day would be chosen for the ceremony.

The plaza was emptied little by little, and yet, the three Germanics could not find it in them to move. Aldrich was worried just as Augustus and really did hope he could help. The disappearance of a loving son was the worst thing a father or mother could go through and he would not leave their spot until he would come back. Ludwig and Roderich waited just as patiently, wanting to wish the emperor some sort of condolences for the failed ceremony. From the grieving look he had as he made his way down, and the several guards he had behind him, his search had been futile. He quickly went over to Aldrich, and he closer, offering comforting hands for the other.

"He's nowhere in the palace, not his room, not the dining areas, nowhere." he told him, eyes seeming to shake in desperation.

"Did you send guards to search the city?"

"Yes, many, right this instant, their checking households even, I want no corner unsearched."

"He will appear safely, Augustus, I assure you that. I, my son and nephew will keep our eyes open for him, we'll search along with the guards." That didn't suit well in Roderich's mind, but Ludwig had no problem with offering any help he could.

"There is no need. I have guards working on it."

"I insis. As a thank you for the invitation." Augustus was about to refuse again, but the more he thought about the dangers his son could be in, the more he realized that they would need more eyes in the city.

“Very well, you may. If you are to get tired, you may return to your inn. Search any place you find he could be in.” Another guard had arrived then, on horseback with others. They were the group that were to search in the outskirts of the city. Augustus joined them in his own horse, wasting no time to gallop away, torches in their hands to light the way.

Once they had disappeared did Aldrich move, nowhere near to their inn, instead to the city... to begin their search.

“Are we really going to stay up all night looking for the prince?” Roderich asked.

He had enough of an answer when both Aldrich and Ludwig turned to him to nod at the exact same time. Roderich groaned but he didn’t have much of a choice, joining them, even if he didn’t do much but just stand there and point to places they could search.

Chapter 4

It was late by then, the streets practically empty except for the guards that passed from time to time still in their search. No trace was yet to be found of the prince and many guards were told to head out of the city to search along with the emperor. Aldrich had been one of those, telling Ludwig and Roderich to maintain their search still in the city. It was a search Ludwig was still dedicated to, having just finished with one of the near baths. After the long night, Roderich was tempted to head inside for a washing of his own. Ludwig refused to let him, saying that it was unfit to rest and enjoy from this when the city was in turmoil for the wellbeing of the prince.

“We don’t even know how this prince looks like. He could have passed right by us and we wouldn’t have noticed,” Roderich commented angrily, sitting down by some stairs, taking in breaths and for once calming down.

“They told us to keep our eyes open for any unusual behaviors. We will just make do with that.” The prince could have his robe, maybe his own crown, a sort of richness in his clothing that could be seen easily. That’s how Ludwig hoped to find him at least.

Roderich huffed to the ground, tired enough to fall down to the dirty floor to sleep. The taller noticed, sighing, but deciding to give Roderich a break for once.

“You may return to the inn if you wish, I’ll continue with the search on my own.”

Roderich was relieved to hear that, and wasted no time on heading his way back to the inn, hurried, afraid that Ludwig would call him back.

It seemed that he would be on his own, the dark, lonely and silent streets of Rome all for him, to explore secret passageways, statues, fountains, cobble, marble and ancient words scripted to the walls, all dancing and singing in his mind, serving a well distraction from his search. He let them all guide him around, opening new areas for his feet to stumble upon new. In his hypnotized state he did not notice that he was reaching the horse stables, where different horses from different parts of the continent were being kept. Ludwig easily found their two, settled the furthest from the rest. At least they had space, a space Ludwig could enjoy as well, a break from his own search. He sat by a stool, petting both the horses, being reminded of his dogs back home. He dearly missed them and wished he could have brought them along on the trip.

Unaware to him, fine sandaled feet made their way down the side of the building, small stairs that fitted his small figure easily. Building through building he had hidden, this storage one the longest he had stayed in. When he didn’t hear any more sounds in the area, he thought he could leave, sick of the foul smells of old meat and other mixtures for the animals in the stable. He wore a wine red hood, covering most of his figure, even his head. He was so preoccupied with leaving, that he didn’t even notice the other.

Ludwig, on the other hand, was lost in the memory of his dogs, but a single glance up, and the figure was clear to him. He grew defensive, taking a dagger from his belt to point

menacingly. The hooded figure was immediately startled, turning so quickly to him that his hood had fallen, revealing the face of only but a young boy.

“Please don’t hurt me!” He said, his voice trembling. “I was only just coming down and I was thinking of taking a horse, b-but then, you’re there-pointing a blade at me, and I can’t do it with someone menacing me,” he admitted, still stuck in his place, clearly shaken, with tears already brimming on his bright brown eyes. Ludwig felt such a pity that he lowered his weapon.

The boy let a moment of joy spread to him, a smile so bright it could have lighten this whole dark corner, but at the coming of loud group footsteps and shouts from the still searching guards, the boy moved closer to him, placing the hood back over his face, but not letting it completely darken his face so the stranger could still see him.

“Are you the stable keeper?” He asked Ludwig.

“No, I just passed by to see my own horses.”

“So this is your own horse then?” He pointed to it, letting himself pet it as lovingly as Ludwig did.

“Yes...” the boy halted every movement, even his breaths as the guards passed, not glancing their eyes to them, as they had already checked this area, the young boy had already seen them do it. Once they had passed did he let himself to move. He reached his hands to the inside of his cape, where he searched on his belt for a pouch, handing it over to Ludwig.

“I’ll grant you this as payment if you lend me your horse and help me leave the city.” Now it was Ludwig’s turn to be startled.

The boy heard the guards pass yet again, which lead him to come closer, shoving the pouch to Ludwig. He had no choice than to hold it in his own hands, still unsure on what answer to give him.

“Please.” This time he begged.

Ludwig didn’t have much of a choice anyway, for the boy was already mounting his horse, taking the reins and looking down below at him, expecting him to be leading right away.

“Just till were at a far enough distance from the city, then I’ll continue on my way and you can have your horse back.” In the end he had decided to offer him help, although this all looked rather suspicious.

From what he could tell, as he lead him out the stables and helped him make his way through the city, slow since he was still walking beside him as he held tight to some of the reigns, he could tell that the boy had no weapon from the occasional opening of his cape. Although the glimpses he had were short, the clothing underneath seemed fine, nothing like even his own father could get with his friendship with the emperor. The cape was just as rich, not to mention that he just shoved at Ludwig a pouch of gold coins, which meant that he was

probably a noble. He was harmless, nothing but an innocent boy trying to simply get out of the city. Ludwig found no harm in helping him.

“Are you planning to leave the city as you are?” He didn’t find on him any other bag. He only had but a small belt and he doubted it contained food or any other necessities.

The boy was silent at the question, his lips pouting as he realized this, grip tightening on the reins. “Yes, I-I have gold and silver, and I can buy anything I will need out there.” He thought it was enough.

“What if you get attack? Do you have anything that will protect you?” And the boy stammered, a blabberish of words as he tried to think of something he had he could use. He barely knew how to fight, he was not as strong as the guards and soldiers, and to be honest, this cape would not hold out any thief or bandit.

“I-I’ll run,” he answered.

Ludwig hoped he was a good runner.

“If I may ask, why are you leaving Rome?” The question came quite suddenly after the silence.

“I couldn’t stand living there any longer.” Ludwig hadn’t expected his answer with such ferocity. It had him turning in alarm.

“Why so? From your clothing I can tell you are of high class. You must have everything, a large house, servants and slaves, anything to your whim.”

The boy hated how it sounded so much like his father.

“It all means nothing when you are limited to what you can enjoy.” He didn’t like showing anger to strangers, but after a life time of being told to remain silent and do as you are told, to ‘show that beautiful smile of yours’, being alone with this stranger in the emptiness of the city, he finally could release what he could not in his home. “I’ve lived my life closed, expected to fulfill anything my father and brother wish, just for tradition and honor. Everything was controlled for me, my clothes, my food, and even my likings. There were days I wasn’t even allowed to gaze out the window, couldn’t paint what I wanted, couldn’t cook, couldn’t harvest in our gardens, not even sing and play the songs I wished to.” By now Ludwig wished he could have taken his words back, but he did no other than remain silent and continue his way, surely now more determined to take him out. No one should live with such restrictions.

“I apologize, I did not know.” And the boy seemed to forgive him with his quick smile, admiring how understanding the stranger was.

He leaned his head now to rest over the long neck of the horse, petting and whispering on how beautiful, tamed and loyal it was. He conversed with the animal like it was another person, maybe even a long friend. It was so sweet that Ludwig couldn’t help the slight smirk on his lip.

He could now spot one of the gates from a distance, ushering if even just slightly. The boy was jolted at the small quickness the horse suddenly took, his eyes having settled on the stranger who was helping him.

Sure, he had seen the occasional blond and blue eyed Roman, from the Italian province, Gaelic province or Hispanian Province, but he had never seen one with the features so prominent, skin so pale to go along with it, obviously not burned or hazed yet from the Mediterranean sun. He was so tall, and even under the tunics, capes and furs, he could tell he was well muscled, strong, such features even shown in his face, and oh dear was he handsome.

"You are not from Rome," he identified, his gaze still strong on him.

"No, I'm from a northern tribe completely far from here."

"A tribe?" That usually meant one thing. It had him sitting immediately well on the horse, terror in his eyes.

"A-Are you one of those barbarian murderers?" He was ready to run off as he was. Ludwig almost felt insulted.

"No! I'll have you know that in my tribe I am considered a prince." They weren't as highly esteem as the emperor, but they were still dignified and deserved as much respect as any other royal member from the empire.

"So...you're not going to murder me?" What a childish accusation.

"No, I will not, I am actually in the city by an invitation from the emperor."

"For the prince's birthday I presume." Trusting his words, the boy settled back into the horse, leaning as he was, his still ongoing curious gaze on the man.

"Yes, but I also came to see the city itself. I've always wanted to come here, ever since I was a child."

The boy though it adorable, smiling and even giggling. "Have you liked it?"

"I have only been here since the early afternoon, but from what I have seen, yes, it's beautiful, I hope I can do more in my stay." And the boy glowed like the compliment had been for him.

Despite how he had basically been trapped in the household all his life, from the occasional glimpses he took to see outside, the city was indeed a masterpiece, formed to every perfect detail by mind and work from his ancestors. It was a city to be proud of, dignified for the sun to crown, to reign...to be prince of.

The boy was going to miss it, but he couldn't wait to leave it...he will no longer be a prisoner to it.

“I’m glad. I hope it continues to be what you expected it to be.” And they both shared a smile that exploded a sentiment in each other, flustering their whole bodies in an unfamiliar feeling. They had to turn away, suddenly afraid of it. Never mind it, they should be focused on the road, the boy on escaping, and Ludwig on helping him out and returning back to his searching. It was no time to feel a sudden attraction to know more of strangers and passing helpers.

One of the less used gates was there for them, facing to the fields, mountains raging in the distance, dark and no guard in eyesight. Ludwig would have loved to help him out more in the distance, but he could not when he was expected in the city. He helped the boy down from the horse, making sure that the cape was well suited on him, like preparing armor on a soldier that was going off to war.

“Are you sure you can make it out there alone? I could wait with you till the morning for it to be safer.”

“I cannot, I have to make my leave now, before my family finds me.”

“Won’t you miss them?” Ludwig found himself thinking about.

No matter how they had closed him, his family most have cared for him to be so overprotective as to not let him out from whatever house he lived in. He wondered over how panicked they would be, how they would be as frantic to search as Augustus was doing for his son. The boy must have though the same as well, faltering on his steps, so close to running off out the gates. He turned to Ludwig, and for a moment he thought he was going to give up, to beg on him to return and apologize for the time he had taken from him on his almost escape.

“I will, but...I just can’t stay here any longer, even if I do care and will miss them along with the city, it won’t change how they treat me, it would only become worst if I return now.” If that was his final decision, then it would be.

The boy though he really needed to thank the kind stranger. With the familiar air they had grown, the boy though it well to let his hood fall off, to move his cape so Ludwig could take a good look at him, not darkened or hidden, now bright under the few dim candle lights that shone in the streets.

The city had been a wonder, but he hadn’t really met someone to go along with it, a Roman to shine as beautifully, like travelers so many times had told him. But with this boy, he finally saw it. His hair, his eyes, his skin, even to the features in his face, was like the bronze and marble around him, living as the trees and the water, taking the form on a human like this in front of him. He was left at such an allure from him that he couldn’t find a word to tell him, couldn’t even move the hands that were still holding the pouch with gold he had given him. Luckily the boy remained silent still for words to be needed, contemplating, his eyes gazing around him, until they fell on Ludwig, golden and blue meeting in quiet delight. Ludwig never though he could feel so in want for someone, for a man even.

“If only I could offer you more,” he finally said, even checking his belt to see if he had something extra he could give him, but all he had now he would need.

“No,” Ludwig interrupted, picking himself up from his interested gazing and handing back the pouch to him. “You will need it for more than I would.”

“But I want to give you something as a token.”

“May I ask for your name then?”

“My name?”

“Yes, what is your name?” Ludwig didn’t expect him to feel so overwhelmed by it, like his name was a curse or something forbidden that should not be in the tongue of others.

The boy still stood so hesitant, anxious, but as he thought on it longer, he thought the stranger deserved this at least.

“May I have yours first?” He thought it fair.

“Ludwig.” There was nothing holding back the strength in even the consonants. The boy could have melted into his arms at how readily he said it.

“I’m...”

“FELICIANO!”

The shout that erupted from the end of the road was enough to crumble the buildings around them. It had the boy cowering behind the horse, hoping that his father wouldn’t recognize him yet from the distance he was in. Could he still run? No, his father was coming down, still mounted in his own horse, heavily armed soldiers and guards to his command that instant, trailing at his back. He couldn’t risk running with people like that behind him.

Ludwig stood confused, offering to stand in front of the boy to hide, still wondering why the emperor would decide to pass through here.

“Ludwig!?” He noticed as he came closer, but he didn’t pay more attention when he noticed the small figure behind the other’s horse. He glared at him intensely, expecting the boy to come out and face him.

He had guards over at the gate, every escape now covered and giving no choice than for the boy to show himself. He shook, he trembled, he pouted, and tears began to swell on his eyes, switching his gaze from his father to the ground, feeling so small, embarrassed even.

“We spent months preparing this night, Feliciano. People traveled over from places as far as Constantinople to witness your ceremony. We got the best of everything for you, I even sent for guards from all over the walls here for extra protection, and you ruin it with this silly escapade of yours.” And his tears fell and his father didn’t do anything but stare, expecting an apology or any word he had on the matter. “If it wasn’t for Ludwig stopping you, you could have gotten out, you could have gotten hurt, kidnapped, killed!” The word had been so strongly shouted that Ludwig was afraid Feliciano would stumble in his shaken state. “The city was worried, your brother, I myself especially.” And for once he had fallen at ease, the more caring and soothing tone appearing. “But thank the gods, you are safe now, and no harm

befell on you. Ludwig, I thank you for finding my son on time, you would be awarded fair soon enough.”

Ludwig had been so shocked.

So this handsome stranger, that he was on the brink of helping to escape, was actually the son of the emperor. He had been so dense to not notice, with his toga and cape, his taken care of state, his likeliness to the emperor and the older prince, even his story should have made it clear. He couldn't let Feliciano continue with this heavy guilt, he had helped himself in this wrong doing.

“Sir, I-”

“I'm so sorry father, I did not mean for you to worry as you did, and I did not know that the ceremony came at such a high cost, but I-" Augustus did not let him continue, he was down from his own horse and was helping his boy to get on, not willing to hear any excuses he had for this.

Ludwig wanted to make it clear, but Feliciano had sent him a signal not to. If they were to find out that Ludwig had actually helped him, he would have gotten in trouble instead of being rewarded. This was his first time in Rome and Feliciano did not want to ruin it for him. Augustus gave one last nod to Ludwig, a good night and was off, along with the rest of his men, on their way to the palace surely. Yet Ludwig remained on his spot, hoping to be awoken from this dream, but the longer he stayed, he realized it was not likely, and what he witnessed, actually happened. Aldrich, who had been part of the group and had seen everything unfold from deeper in the crowd of guards reached him, waking him up from his stupefaction with a strong yet assuring hold on his shoulder. He advised to head to their inn and finally sleep for the night, and Ludwig agreed. A rest from all this could calm his mind, maybe even forget about the delightful meeting he had with the prince.

Chapter 5

The Prince...it had been the prince!

It was a mantra that Ludwig kept repeating to himself during the night, rested upon his bed, waiting for sleep to take him over. It had been hard, for he felt like he still lay with the weights from what had happened earlier.

Searching himself along with the groups and yet he had almost lead the very object of their search out, probably to worst dangers, and if word came out, he could have been blame for his death or anything that happened to him. Blessed he felt that Augustus had stopped him on time and the identity was revealed.

It dawned on him that he was nothing presentable. He had been such a fool, nothing in accordance to how he was supposed to act with a prince. He probably thought he was a commoner from that very area...even if he did tell him where he was from and why he came there. He had been kind though, and although the slight terror that went through him when he found out he was Germanic, he had placed trust on him and he had let Ludwig help him, be in his presence like any other in the city. He really shouldn't worry so much. He should just go to sleep, tomorrow would be another day in the city for him to enjoy. He fell finally into the serene darkness, hazy dreams of a smile, an all too adoring and beautiful smile that seemed familiar. His dreams didn't last long for him to see, he was awoken by a push on him...several that gave him no choice but to awaken.

"Ludwig!" He identified his father calling. "Wake up this instant! We must get going!" He left him to continue in his changing, seeing as Ludwig was awoken enough to sit up and rub any trace of the short sleep he had on him.

"Where exactly are we going?" He looked to his side to see Roderich changing just as hastily as his father, a bit more preoccupied that everything was on check, deciding on wearing one of the more simpler tunics. It actually suited and made him seem handsome for whatever occasion.

"A messenger came over, we have been invited to the palace!" Ah yes, Augustus had said that he would reward him soon enough, maybe this was it.

He stood and began changing with them, new tunics and pants, but pretty much his same accessories and cape.

"What for exactly?" He needed to make sure just in case.

"The Prince's birthday. They changed the ceremony for today but decided to have something more private inside the palace. Augustus said it would help to keep a better eye on his son after the escape he tried yesterday." So it seemed.

Now he understood why Feliciano didn't want to return earlier when he had hesitated. The guarding eyes on him did become as worst as he had said. He felt bad for joining along in a

feast that seemed to defend more his imprisonment, but to be honest, part of him was excited to actually visit the palace inside...not to mention another meeting with the prince.

No, it was the palace he wanted to see! The palace!

Once done and ready, they made their way as they had done yesterday. Despite how it was decided then to be a smaller celebration, he saw large groups of people coming, each with clothing much more refined than what they had yesterday. With it being inside the palace now, it made sense that people changed their garments to something more dignified of the location they were going to be in. He noticed that inside there were more guards than what he had seen the day before outside. Them, and especially the servants, lead each group deeper into the palace, pass archways painted in symbols of gods and wine, columns in simple marble or colored to give it more liveliness, extensive and tall, with enough space to probably have all the population of Rome, ceilings that Ludwig thought no man could reach and it had him questioning how they even managed to build something so tall. Other items decorated the halls; vases, flowers, statues, even small fountains engraved on the walls. Ludwig was tempted to continue his own way through the halls, but instead, he was lead to a large room, where many people were already settled about, each in their white tables with fine fruits and other foods for the guest to indulge in. They were assembled in a large square, leaving a space on the center for their entertainment of music, theater and dance surely. Ludwig and his family were given a table in one of the ending corners, greatly taking their seats in the soft materials of their chairs. As Ludwig looked around him, others were laid down on beds of their own, already taking from the offered drinks and food, which looked so fine that Ludwig was afraid to even touch, like they would melt under his horrendous fingers. Pass the arriving guests and the beautiful design of the room, his eyes finally fell on the table at the very front. It was the largest of all, only offering for the three people that sat: The emperor Augustus, and the princes, Lovino and Feliciano. With the amount of people there, plus the ones that took their attention, they probably haven't noticed the three of them arrive. It was excellent for Ludwig to watch them without being noticed.

Augustus chattered amiably as always. Lovino looked unimpressed as he had his chin on his hands, looking all around him for something entertaining to catch his eyes for once. And Feliciano, he would greet many of the known guests with smile and chatter as friendly as his father, but when they left, he would look down, as bored and sad as his older brother. He would trace his fingers around the table, imagining he was creating a painting there, a grin on his face that seemed contagious to Ludwig, smiling something as equally.

He was staring too much at him, wasn't he? Feliciano must have felt it, because soon enough he raised his glance towards him, eyes connected once again like the night before. He adorned a lovely smile, giving it along with a small wave towards him. Seeing as he was caught, Ludwig had to return it, his wave shy and weak that went well with his small blush. Feliciano found it adorable on such a big man, giggling, which caught the attention of his father. He changed his glance before he could notice who he was smiling at like that, seeming like he was still distracted with whatever he had mentally drawn on the table.

With much of the guests finally in the room, Augustus thought it well to continue, his simple standing enough for everyone to fall silent and look up to this new speech he held.

“I would like to apologize more formerly over the events of yesterday and I hope that this more private dinner is enough to prove so. We will continue with the feast now as planned, but first of all, I would like to thank Ludwig, for he had found my son and had stopped him before anything else could happen. So now, may we please raise a glass for his honor.”

Augustus raised his own golden one to him, all around them the men raising theirs as well. Shyly Ludwig raised his along with Roderich and Aldrich, who seemed proud of the attention Ludwig had given them. With a blessing and a toast, they all drank from the delicious wine.

After so, he continued with another speech like the one he had given yesterday about his son, his talents and honors and such. He knew that it was the things that his family had placed for him and the things he had been told he hated and he hoped to escape from. But at the moment it didn't seem like so, for he smiled and nodded like it was the true honor he was supposed to feel.

“-my son, Feliciano," he finished.

And Feliciano stood, the room erupting in applause as he bowed. Once he stood long enough for the applauses to tire, he walked over to the priest, who was standing in a corner with the same items from the night before. He could see the priest chant some old Latin words. Feliciano was removed of his golden bulla necklace and was then given a new toga and cape, white obviously, with small designs in red and gold, going well along with him and assenting the materials of those of a grown prince and man. The priest ended the ritual with the placing of his new crown, this one in colored flowers to place elegantly on his hair, matching well with his lively aura. With some last chanting words, he was done, the boy turning to the crowds, which applauded yet again. This time did Feliciano actually look disturbed, his mind seeming distracted with a horrible realization, even if he forced a smile, quite quickly heading over to his seat, his fingers distracted with the new clothing, admitting they were soft to his touch and indeed comfortable to his figure.

With the ceremony done, it was time for the music, players coming with their array of instruments to play in the center. Dancers also came, moving swiftly and beautifully for all of them to see. It was a pity that most conversed along and didn't pay much attention, although they occasionally pointed when a specific note played heavenly or when a dancer moved to leave them in awe. Ludwig had been one of those that didn't pay much attention, even at the wonderful melody, for his eyes remained yet on the prince, through hidden little holes from the mess in the center, which was great to not have the prince notice.

Feliciano enjoyed from the music, moving along with it even as he sat, enjoying from the dances, his eyes locked on the females especially, truly wondered. He only ever stopped when his father or brother tried to speak to him, and even though Ludwig couldn't hear him, he could tell he was answering to all their questions in pure delight. One conversation in particular he had with his father had them both looking up to his table yet again. Ludwig hoped he looked away just in time, but once he looked back, much of the music done and the dancers preparing to leave, the prince, along with the emperor, were standing from their table, and from the looks of it, they were heading to his own. Ludwig quickly prepared himself for this encounter, making sure none of the food he had eaten fell on his clothes, and that his hair and anything else was in order. Aldrich and Roderich finally noted their approach, stopping

their own conversation and preparing simply by turning and nodding, as an approval that there was no problem of being in the presence of both an emperor and a prince.

“A pleasure to see the three of you here.”

“And a pleasure to be invited, everything has been excellent, my congratulations to you, your highness.” Feliciano nodded and even bowed in appreciation to the words.

“Ah yes, for my reason of coming here, I’d like you all to properly meet my son.” Augustus let him move forward, although Feliciano only moved close to Ludwig, his smile clearly only for him, and Ludwig was distracted enough not to care, staring back just as eagerly, although he didn’t know how he could compete with such a smile.

Augustus held him from his shoulder and moved him over to face Aldrich and Roderich first, introducing each.

“Ah, Aldrich! Father has told me so much about you! It’s great to finally meet you in person.”

“Really? What kind of things does he go on with?” He asked curiously, eyeing Augustus with a suspicious glare.

“He tells me of how you met, how you were prisoned in one of our watchtowers mistaken for a bandit. But it all turned out right in the end. Father let you go and you became really good friends. He tells me you’re pretty good for a barbarian, but that you’re really repressed and you have an awful taste in clothing, and that the food you used to bring to him for the exchanges were awful.” Augustus laughed hoping the rest took it as a joke, his hold on the boy’s shoulder becoming incredibly tight. It was a form of scolding surely, for Feliciano began to cringe at it and his eagerness had dwindled. Hoping to ease the air around them, Augustus turned Feliciano once again to face Ludwig.

“And I’m sure you two met yesterday.” And once again they were staring at each other, in nothing but silence and gazes too intense.

“N-not as properly though,” Ludwig said after he came to the realization that he didn’t like the glare Augustus was giving him.

“Indeed.” But Feliciano did not notice it, distracted with the Germanic that still stood as handsome as he had seen him the night before.

Once again, Augustus held tight to him and Feliciano noticed where exactly he was, a place where he shouldn’t stare so dreamily to a foreign stranger.

“Father, is it all right if I walk around the palace with Ludwig,” he asked, taking by surprise everyone in the room, his gazing finally breaking to turn to his father.

“For what exactly?”

“I want to properly thank him, plus I want to show him our home, deserving enough for what he did.”

Augustus thought it proper, nodding and finally letting go of his son. Feliciano quickly took Ludwig's arm and lead him out to another hall, Ludwig easily following behind him, quite excited to seeing more of the palace...as well as talking of other things with the prince.

Augustus and Aldrich watched them leave, disappearing behind a corner, in the halls that would lead them to the terrace in the back. Augustus decided on sitting down along with Aldrich to begin in friendly chatter, while they waited for their sons to return from the little tour.

Feliciano choose this area for the sparse guards that were there, not really watching, some deeper into the halls conversing with others. It was perfect to be alone with Ludwig and speak, a great view of the city behind them that Ludwig had been distracted enough to not notice the still hold Feliciano had on his arm. Once Feliciano could see that they were surely alone, away from the eyes of any guards, guests, or servants, did he finally let go, turning to him to speak.

"The prince!" Was the first thing Ludwig omitted once he noticed himself that they were indeed alone. "You were the prince!"

"Glad I was that you did not notice," Feliciano dared giggled.

"Why did you ask for my help? I was one of the many searching."

"I did not know you were, I didn't even know you were the part of the Germanic group that my father had invited to the ceremony. You just happened to be there and you gladly offered to help." And he chuckled, easing over to the wall to rest his arms upon, gladly welcoming Ludwig to do the same.

The breeze was blowing strong, the late afternoon sun giving an excellent light to the city. What a wonder it was! Feliciano let himself be taken by it, ready to rest into dream that moment if Ludwig hadn't continued.

"I wasn't just going to leave you go the whole way alone."

"That was very nice of you, and..." he turned to him, serious to the words he was to say next. "And even if I couldn't get out, I still really wanted to thank you for helping me."

"I should thank you for not telling your father that I was helping you."

"If my father knew that, he would have held you prisoner, probably blame you for kidnapping the prince. You didn't deserve that."

"Well...that was very nice of you." Feliciano chuckled yet again, this time covering it with his hand, likely embarrassed that he was smiling and laughing so much with a stoic man.

"So...what you told me yesterday- was it all...?"

"Real?" Feliciano guessed, quite insulted that Ludwig dared doubt him.

“You didn’t seem at all disappointed or angered as you were yesterday during the ceremony.” And he was right on that.

“What do you expect? I’m supposed to or else father would get mad at me. He was especially mad yesterday after everything.” And any trace of joy was left as he recalled what happened. “He was screaming... loudly. When I left the room we were talking in, most of our servants were cowering away, afraid of what my father could do that angry.”

“What was he going on with exactly?” He eased closer. After all, Feliciano trusted him with this information, and he preferred that it stayed between them in quiet whispers.

“Basically what you heard him say last night. How I ruined the celebration, that something could have happened to me, and that... I wasn’t ready to head out to the city. Apparently...” he gazed away from him, his eyes saddened, his entire composure falling like the leaves in front of them that pushed down with the strong passing wind, and yet his smile refused to leave him. “I’m too weak, that I would simply be used off and I would be too naïve to notice.” He was probably quoting all this from what his father had told him, the words having repeated themselves in his head as soon as Augustus uttered them.

“Why does he force you so much to stay in the palace?”

“He still sees me as the little crying baby boy he held back when I was born eighteen years ago. My mother used her last dying breath to tell him that she wanted me safe, to remain in the palace for as long they could keep me here. They thought everything outside our walls would corrupt my innocence, so ever since, I’ve been locked here.” And silence was met afterwards, Ludwig hoping that it could calm him for now, let the breeze work more of the cooling it had been doing.

“Does your father even think to let you go out?”

“He says he will, step by step.” Whatever that meant exactly to how things worked there.

“You are finally of age, I assume he expected for you to reach it to start.”

“I did wish to at least give the city a stroll as a gift.”

“And did he accept?”

“If a guard is at my side the entire time.” At least his father was kind enough to let him.

It was about time to start letting him go out, and although they were still rules and watchful eyes, it was something after only remaining in these magnificent walls...even after his try at the escape.

“What if I choose you?”

Ludwig looked to him, making sure he heard him correctly. “I don’t think they’ll let me.”

“Father won’t mind. As long as someone is with me there is no problem. You are Aldrich’s son, plus you’re strong like a guard would be, you’re as perfect as any other I could choose.”

He smiled hoping it was enough to coax him.

He shouldn't, he really shouldn't, he should be convincing him not to, maybe even help him choose another guard that could go. But those eyes, shinning with a sunlight that matched so well with him, so beautiful, so alluring. How could he deny such an invitation? How could he deny a day to stroll Rome with someone like Feliciano?

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, the weather over here made it impossible to write, plus many other things like...baking. Also, starting school again on Wednesday, so preparing and the such. I would also like to say that after this chapter, my updates will be VERY slow. Like I said, school starting. If I do continue to manage posting once a week, or even once every two weeks...yeah, send me a message and see if I'm all right because I'm probably not getting sleep and stressing myself beyond what I should. No worries, I will continue to work on it when I have the time.

Also, small spamano in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Augustus had accepted to Feliciano's choice of guard. Of course, he would have preferred another, but he did want to comply with what Feliciano wanted, being it a birthday present. Still, Ludwig was a fine choice and he didn't mind putting his trust on him for the day. Right before they had left for the night, Augustus had taken him to a corner to speak of all the type of warnings Ludwig needed to know to make it work.

He was not to leave the gates of the city, Ludwig was to remain close to him the entire time, he had permission to inflict any kind of force on him to keep him away from trying anything that he shouldn't, he was to leave the palace by the early rising sun and wanted Feliciano back by the late twilight. His last request...don't fall into his charms.

He was gone, wishing him a good night and a farewell before Ludwig could question him and before he could wish a good bye himself to Feliciano. He didn't mind much, he would have the entire day with him tomorrow and settled away back with his family to the inn.

The next morning, he was the first to awake, trying out several of the clothing they had brought. None did he though fitting, a pile already by the sides of the room that Aldrich had met with when he woke himself.

"What is this?" He asked, truly perplexed by it, part of him thinking that this was maybe still a dream. Ludwig was not one to think highly of clothing and attire like Roderich.

"I will be spending the day with Feliciano and I wish not to look like another lower class member of the city when I am with the prince." He had then finally settled on a tunic, a dark green one that most probably belonged to his father, but he took it still, changing and already decided. It had some nice designs, fine and even different. Settling on his boots and pants wasn't so hard, hoping that most didn't get tired of the tight silver bracelets and same leather

belt. "This will do." He did not want to waste his morning with it. He should already be making his way.

The prince...was actually awaiting him.

Before he left, Aldrich stopped him, throwing him over a small dagger knife. "Managed to sneak it in, though you would need it more than I would." And glad he was to have it. Even in this city there were dangers that he would have to face, especially with the prince around him. He would have to defend himself and Feliciano like he had promised Augustus.

With a last wave, with luck and blessings, Ludwig left the inn on his way through the learned route of the palace. With it being the early morning, the streets were still dimmed with amount of people, only some slaves dealing with heavy businesses or workers who were preparing the opening of their kiosks or stores. It was ease for Ludwig to walk upon, more relaxed, taking his time to arrive seeing as there were no distractions or obstacles to cover his path.

Soon enough the palace was in sight, already clear movement, mostly from guards or the occasional senator that came to visit. With his arrival, guards moved with the news, leaving Ludwig to wait at the base of the stairs while they fetched for the prince. It didn't take long, for as soon as there was word that Ludwig was waiting for him, Feliciano ran hastily across the halls, out into this new morning sun. Ludwig was indeed excited to see him, but he held any more expressions, dealing with the grip of his hands as he admired how handsome the prince was this morning, the palace and the sun assenting his welcome only for him. His toga for today was simple and short, only but a golden belt at his waist.

As soon as Feliciano saw him, he waved and even jumped down the steps hurriedly. He skipped and seemed to dance down, Ludwig being reminded of the children back in his village. Some guards grew worry though, and some were willing to run to him and make sure his descend didn't go wrong. Luckily Feliciano got to the bottom safely, only stumbling slightly once he reached Ludwig, but the other held him before he could fall off. Breaths of relief seemed to have sung all across the palace as they had watched.

"You're here!" He exclaimed, his hands landing on his arms, gripping to have a reassurance.

"Of course I am, why wouldn't I be?"

Feliciano didn't want them to continue on that. "Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on!" And to his surprise, instead of pulling him further from the palace, he was taking him inside the palace.

"I thought we were going-"

"I want to see the chariot races first!"

Chariot racing? Of course Ludwig was interested, but shouldn't they be making their way to the circus? Why were they going to the palace?

As Feliciano pulled him down along different halls, steps, and even green grounds, he realized that the circus was actually right behind the palace. Why didn't he notice it yesterday?

Feliciano pulled him along still, even when reaching a sort of small house building where he could spot two people sitting. As they made their way through it, he noticed the figures as the emperor and Lovino, both seated and ready to enjoy from the race for today.

"Ah, Ludwig, good morning!" Augustus called as he noticed them pass.

"Good morning, your majes-" he wasn't allowed to say much when Feliciano was dragging him more into the crowds of seats that circled around the circus.

He brought them up close, the first round of seats where they were to have a clear view of the race. He took his seat, sitting straight and patiently waiting for it to begin, Feliciano on the other hand, even as he sat, still seemed to jump, eyes gleaming, even trying to hold any other emotions by the biting of his lip.

"Have you ever seen a chariot race?"

"Not this up close!" That explained his eagerness.

"Have you though?"

"I've heard from them, but it's also my first time."

Feliciano gasped, holding to his arms, dragging him even closer, standing so they could practically be in danger of falling into the ring.

"I'm sure you'll love them, they have many of our best racers for today, even one of mine and Lovino's favorites."

"You seem to know a lot for someone who hasn't seen them up close."

"There's a good view from the palace, where I always watched them from. Lovino would sometimes join me when Antonio races."

"Antonio?"

They were both driven silent by its beginning; a crash of horses, chariots, reigns and drivers out into the prepared sand. They all came in together first, in a line that almost seemed orderly if it wasn't for the already boiling competition between them. The crowds shouted on their cheers, even Feliciano applauded and joined in, standing and jumping, like he had been there several times before to know, seeming to cheer for everyone there, not just this Antonio fellow he mentioned.

They all waved to the crowd, enjoying clearly all this attention, trying to make tricks to impress their audience even more.

"That's Antonio!"

Feliciano pointed to one of the youngest looking riders, the one with the messy brown hair and the usual Mediterranean sun tan that he had seen in most of the citizens of the peninsula. He seemed strong willed, the only one of all the riders who paid good attention to his horses even on his test run, who made sure all the reigns and even the very chariot was safe. Antonio must have noticed the young prince, for he directed a wave just for him, and of course Feliciano returned it just as eagerly.

“Do you know him?”

“His father and mine are also good friends. He used to be trader, so he came a lot to Rome from Hispania with letters and other things for my father. I’ve known him since I was a child. He got really interested in chariot racing from the things he saw from the palace and got himself into it.”

By then the race had begun, the more cheerier presentation seen earlier, now turned into a rough and angered race, all the determination of the players thrown into it to complete the necessary laps. Ludwig was so close as to feel the stadium almost gallop along with the horses that ran, the dust of the sand surely getting comfortable in his hair, dirtying his face and yet Feliciano continued to cheer as widely as the crowd despite.

“He’s an excellent rider,” Ludwig commented, seeing as Antonio had the major lead.

“He is, both my brother and I adore him, he’s like another older brother to me...to my own brother though...” he took a quick glance to him, chuckling before his attention was set back on the race.

Huh? Did he miss something? He turned to where Lovino sat.

Despite how he sat calm, taking from some of the offered grapes from time to time, he paid good attention to the race, a little too much attention to the star chariot racer. He even smirked, probably the first time Ludwig actually saw him wore something else other than a scowl. But as he paid more attention himself, he noticed that his stare was nothing like the interested, skill admiring and even brotherly stare that Feliciano gave him. This one was more...lustful, similar to the ones the men in his village gave to the more beautiful women. Whatever feelings Lovino had for Antonio, it wasn’t at all innocent or even familiar in a family sense. He rathered not continue thinking about that and settle with what was left of the race.

Antonio had once again won, the crowds deeply approving of this, even the emperor, who clapped as eagerly as the rest. As soon as the chariots left and the crowd began to empty out of the circus, Feliciano held to his arm and very forcefully lead him out, faster than any of the slow paced around them.

They were out back into the palace before any large crowd could form, Feliciano easily leading them through every small shortcut he knew until they were back out to the front of the palace, into the heavy streets that began to flow with people. There was commotion of a beginning new day, of strolls, of traders and sellers bringing different kinds of items to sell to the population, all to which Feliciano stopped to give attention. He admired all the vases, the jewelry, the fabrics, dragging Ludwig all along to watch, giving comments to the sellers on

their beauty and all the effort given to it. Of course his people would be as kind to him, explaining far more details that Feliciano and Ludwig very interested listened to. It was impressive how Feliciano maintained everything quick, but yet just the enough time each little kiosk or building deserved. He was more preoccupied with moving them along to his next destination.

It stood so wonderfully, as if awaiting only for them, in all the majesty they have told Ludwig about. Feliciano, stared at it himself with the same perplexing stare, his fast pace disappearing to careful steps as they moved closer to the coliseum.

Many others passed by them, on their normal stroll, only giving it but small glimpses, though they still stared with the ever interest they had even begun to get used to feeling. It gave them just enough space to stand close, to let themselves be casted under the large shadow, cooling them from the ever so present hot sun.

Ludwig was sure he spoke, what it was, he could not make sure, but it was fruitless since Feliciano really didn't listen, all his being interested solely on all the details he could come across. He would have loved to come inside, explore even the arena, but he knew he wasn't supposed to, as well as it was closed with no game for the day. But quickly Feliciano turned his attention away to the large statue right in front of him, a shout of glee as he headed towards it instead, admiring, even sighting dreamily as if he was fawning over any other female or male in the city. He even leaned across its base, Ludwig not sure if he could even do that. As he came closer, it really made sense why they called this statue the Colossus. It stood almost as tall as the very amphitheater, to seem as powerful as their gods. Ludwig felt so intimidated by it that he even pulled Feliciano out its grasp hoping to continue onward.

Once Feliciano was awoken from the daze, something else took his attention and he was hurrying Ludwig once again. He brought him over to a temple this time, large as many of the things he had already seen. This one though, was more spacious, one could enter and admire all the colors, designs and details made for it. Just before entering, Feliciano had grabbed many flowers that had been growing in some of the bushes they passed, enough to form a bouquet, held tightly in his hands, quite the anticipation as they headed up the stairs inside. He looked around with the same new admiration, holding tightly to Ludwig's arm as they made their way closer to the large statue at the end.

"That's our goddess Roma," Feliciano told him in a whisper, to not damage the already quiet and tranquil air around them.

Feliciano bowed and placed some of the flowers on the steps, adding already to the offerings many others had given her for the day. Feliciano's prayer was quiet, some chant under his lips that Ludwig could not even understand, easing close and trying to listen, to the point that his face even leaned against his, Feliciano finishing and noticing with a giggle.

There were still flowers left in his hold and once done, he lead him out to the other side of the temple, for the one he truly wished to see. It was very similar to one they had just been in, but of course, much of the art changed to something that was more for this goddess, elegant, rich, all tones of colors that clearly made one think of love. Ludwig could not distinguish who it was yet, his knowledge of the Roman gods wasn't plentiful and he didn't want to say something that might seem insulting, especially to a goddess that Feliciano glowed upon as

soon as they entered. By then he let go of Ludwig, heading in front of him to the statue at the end. He offered all the flowers he held, kneeling for a long period, his praying chants different from the earlier one. Ludwig couldn't hear him this time, wandering around the building, seeming lost, when actually he kept trying to search every corner this building offered, every delicate stroke, every brick and marble shaped to such angles that only added to extensive designs that assented the shape, the colors, the form, and even the very statue were most of the worshipping was occurring. By the time he returned back to Feliciano's side, he still couldn't figure out who it belonged to.

"Venus," Feliciano answered for him, guessing why Ludwig was searching throughout the temple.

"Oh, thank you." He kneeled beside him, seeing as Feliciano made himself comfortable there, his gaze still on the large statue as he continued with his own mental prayers.

"Is she your favorite?"

"I suppose so. Most of my prayers are giving to her."

"If I recall correctly, she is the goddess of love."

"Love, as well as beauty, prosperity, fertility, desire and sex."

"Why do you pray to this one specifically? There are others like Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, or even Roma."

They were usually gods that had more to do with protection and luck, for the city, for the continuing of one's life, usually the ones people of imperial blood like Feliciano would worship the most. He though Feliciano had skipped the question or just decided not to hear him, as he spaced, eyes still on the figure, seeming to forget that Ludwig was kneeling right next to him.

"I assume you've heard enough to know that my mother passed with my birth. I always felt at fault even if my father and brother deny it, so I always did hope to compensate somehow. The household went on with comparisons of her to Venus and how it was the goddess my mother mostly held cult for when she arrived from Greece."

"So you worship Venus because of your deceased mother."

"Somewhat. Venus is the goddess we tend to associate with life and motherhood, a goddess mostly our woman would be loyal to, something that my father has many times scolded me for, but it's nice to follow a goddess that focuses mostly on love, on new life and new opportunities, when so many are focused on war and violence."

What a rare thing to hear from a Roman.

"It would make sense since I relate to most of the woman in this city and my mother...closed, expected to fulfill duties under the ruling of your father or any other males, your life decided and driven by another just for the wellbeing of any future children. I may be male, and a

prince at that, but I'm looked upon as weak and worthless as one." And there once again was a hating tone, one of anger, one that even shook him as if more wanted to come out. He could tell that Feliciano was holding any other words, having to embrace himself to calm down, trying to feel more of the breeze, the cool marble and the stare his goddess gave him, somehow understanding and reassuring.

"No woman deserves that," he said lastly on the matter. He stood up so quick, and was already taking his arm, changing the topic to something about food before Ludwig could question it any longer or offer any words of comfort.

They were back into the city, the sun high in evening, walking sometimes even arm in arm as they scurried through the streets; upward, downward, just any direction so they could lose themselves more in the route. Feliciano was so tempted to take Ludwig to the baths, but with their short amount of time left, they simply could not waste it sitting on water. Feliciano had the baths in his own palace anyways, if anything he could go there later in the night.

They were met with yet another temple, the temple of Jupiter, which Feliciano only gave a short visit, with a single vow, a short chant, no gift, and continued onward unto the soldier camps.

They trained along as per their normal routine, clashes of swords and other weapons, grunts, falls, all kinds of groans and screams as they practiced for the harsher war treatments out of the safety of the city. Every throw they made was practiced, skilled, with such a ferocity and push of strength that made anyone cower and run. Even with his own strength, Ludwig didn't think he could take any of them, when they could throw a piece of bark and make it seem powerful and deadly. Both Feliciano and he looked on with such interest, yet Feliciano seemed to hold tighter to him when right next to them they witness a soldier punched another to the floor. Upon noticing the prince, he greeted with a bow and the usual good evening, and it was then that Ludwig noticed Feliciano was trembling with his shaky good morning back.

They continued until they reached the pantheon, where they remained the longest, for it offered the many statues of past emperors, Feliciano explaining to Ludwig his knowledge of each. They witnessed the shining eye from above changed its position around the building as Feliciano continued to explain, he himself falling in awe with the colors, the shining play of the sun, to the floor that was welcoming and didn't mind their hurried childish steps or even sitting.

With sun set coming even closer, Ludwig suggested that they made their way back by now, but Feliciano convinced him to take a little extra more steps, to a bridge that stood in the very divide of the city, over the Tiber. Feliciano stood and lay there just to relax, wanting to witness this setting sun disappear under the city, its glow reigning once again upon it.

Ludwig didn't think he would meet with another city that shined golden in sunset.

Everything was there, everything for Feliciano to gaze, yet he maintained his eyes on the aqueducts, which still lay high over the city, following until the arched building disappeared far into the hills, where they could not wander. He refused to look at anything else, and Ludwig, curious, remained with his own stare on him, hoping to figure why it was.

“We could take a closer look as we return,” Ludwig suggested.

Feliciano turned to him, awake, coming to terms to where exactly he was standing. “Oh...” and instead of the aqueducts he now looked to the river, to high above the mountains, clearly hoping to see something more.

“Have you ever seen the ocean, Ludwig?” He finally asked.

“The ocean?” He let himself think about it for a moment. “In passing, yes, quite recently though.” He saw more of everything in this trip to Rome.

Since he was in charge of watching over the village, Ludwig preferred staying in the limits of where he could be aware of anything happening, so the only bodies of water he had met were small and large rivers and lakes.

“Is it beautiful?”

“Well of course, it’s vast, continues far ahead into the horizon infinitely, in a beautiful shade of blue and the coolest breeze of air I’ve ever felt.” And the shine in Feliciano’s eyes was more than anything he could give to this city.

Sadly it was an image that he could only imagine in his head, resting upon the bridge now as if pretending he could feel the sandy shore grace over his skin.

“What about the smell?”

“I didn’t head that close to know, but I suppose salty and...fresh,” he recalled, wishing he could have thought of more words so the dreaming boy had more of an idea, but Feliciano made do with that, noticing the sun reach lower and lower until only but some small glimpses were left of it.

“I wish one day to see it in person.”

And Ludwig did not know what to say to that. He didn’t know how long Augustus hoped to maintain Feliciano in the city and he didn’t know how long Feliciano will continue to maintain loyal under him. Yet, he truly hoped he managed one day, an assurance enough with the smile he gave him. Feliciano seemed to have gotten the message, for he smiled back, more grandiose than his own, Ludwig had to admit.

“We should be heading back, your father will be awaiting and I did promise him your return by this time.”

Feliciano groaned like a child would, but he obeyed, finally standing from his position and going his way along ahead, making sure Ludwig still walked closely to him.

From the opening mornings, now Feliciano could see it close into the night, candles and torches lighting up the streets for the approaching darkness, the streets emptying, with people now in their homes, relaxed, eating or even preparing for their sleep. This time they took an all too different route, hoping to see bits of things they couldn’t, like the forum or empty and silent squares.

When they reached back to the palace hill, only but the last gleams settled on the sky, darkening and stars decorating it one by one. Augustus had been passing by one of the front openings of the palace to notice their arrival, a smile and a wave to make sure Ludwig had seen him. He quickly settled back into the palace to other businesses, leaving some guards to watch.

Feliciano sigh, in clear despair, knowing that for tonight, it was once again back into the palace, to the same halls and room he was accustomed to.

“Thank you, once again.”

“A pleasure it was, I got to see more of the city and learn things I wouldn’t have alone.”

To his surprise, Feliciano took his hands in a loving hold, with such a delightful smile that he couldn’t let go. Was this a type of appreciation? Or just some weird good bye he hadn’t seen yet? Feliciano actually laughed at how cute he looked confused, walking close, so near for their chests to even touch.

“How long will you be staying in the city?”

“Not quite sure, my father didn’t specify, but I don’t think I’ll be leaving any time soon.”

Feliciano’s smile grew wider, stepping away inch by inch.

“Could it be possible to ask you to come to the palace once again tomorrow?”

“May I?”

“Of course you can, with my permission it is allowed.”

“If there’s no problem with your father.”

“So I will see you tomorrow then?”

Ludwig hesitated if for a moment, not sure how the palace would react to a foreigner being in the presence of the prince for so long. But with the very boy looking up to him with such a plead, and that smile, he sigh, defeated yet again.

“You will.”

And for the way the boy light up, it was enough for him to be sure of his answer.

Feliciano then leaned, placing a short and quick kiss on his cheek, so sudden that it was over before Ludwig could feel it even linger.

“Good night.” A wave, a look of seduction in his eyes, even in his tone as he hurriedly made his way up.

Ludwig was left at the spot, even as Feliciano disappeared back into the palace, still on wonder over what just happened. He raised his hand to feel upon the place he kissed.

Nothing, not the wetness, not the even the feel was there anymore...and he hated that.

Why was he so annoyed for it being so quick?

He let his hand fall and preferred to return back to the inn. His father would love to hear about this...although he was going to have to leave some details out of the conversation.

Chapter End Notes

* In other historical facts, the coliseum was not actually called the 'coliseum', what was actually called the colossus was the statue in front of it, hence why it later got it's change of name. What we now know as the coliseum used to be called the Flavian Amphitheater, but for the sake of keeping words we know and got used to, I didn't change it.

*I'll be honest, once of the songs I kept having on repeat as I wrote and on my breaks was Venus by Lady Gaga. Got my mind working on a whole new idea for GerIta, but I'll leave that for the future.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

I have finally managed to post. I am still very much flooded with work so I will still remain as slow. Still, have hope in me! And I hope you enjoy this chapter!

Feliciano liked to doze a lot, and it was something the entire palace knew about and most of the time didn't try to break. He was at his calmest, and usually afterwards he found himself with great inspiration, a new piece of music or art to work on, which would surely showcase more of his amazing talent. But this particular morning, there was something different about it. He didn't really look tired or sleepy as he usually did, he was just thinking, on something so delightful and sweet that he couldn't stop the active smile or the dreamy look in his eyes. He picked flowers from the garden, immersed in their softness and beauty...at least that's what most thought. Lovino could tell other wise and had come to him wanting to know immediately. He found him leaning against one of the windows, a single flower in his hand, flowing with the strong breeze that came from being so high up in the palace. He was so preoccupied with whatever he was thinking about that he didn't notice his older brother approach.

"What is going on with you?" He went straight to the point, a scolding air about him that Feliciano had been used to. When he turned to him, he didn't look scared or worried, but smiled as he usually did, even came near to share a tight embrace, twisting around with him like in a dance.

"Seriously, what is wrong with you?"

"Oh Lovino, I had the most wonderful time yesterday. I saw a circus race up close, traveled every street of Rome I could, the coliseum, the colossus, the temple of Roma, Jupiter and Venus, the campus martius, the pantheon, the forum, and I spent it all with someone like Ludwig." The breath that left him when he mentioned the name drew a curious accusation from his brother, but Feliciano moved so quickly around him to notice.

"You mean the tall blonde barbarian, with the piercing blue eyes and the intimidating aura."

Feliciano stopped his twirling to stand and look at his brother incredulous. "He is not."

"Of course he is, he looks like he could kill a man with only a swing of his arm."

Feliciano laughed, for he could just not see it. It only earned another glare from his brother, who was indeed starting to get suspicious with Feliciano's calming considering this foreigner.

“He was sweet, gentle, loyal and curious like a child would be. I see no malice but a mind who wants to acquire all the knowledge it can while in Rome.” And there he went again, gazing weirdly at the flower, with a glow, redness and a faint smile yet full of emotion.

“Knowledge for destruction surely.”

“He did not come here to attack, Lovino. He is with a good friend of father’s.”

“That still does not excuse him.” And none of his words seemed to faze the young prince, who now continued his way back to the gardens. Lovino still followed him, to the garden they had in the center of the building, where many types of flowers grew beautifully. It was the area with more natural color in the whole palace.

Lovino leaned over one of the opening arches, watching as his brother continued with his flower picking. White ones, pink ones, and a little purple.

“You’re fond of him I see. Is he the reason why you’re acting this way?”

And Feliciano didn’t even try to hide it. The redness on his face was clearly a blush, his smile was him returning to the few memories he had of their time together, and all this dancing and flowing was surely whatever feelings he had coming to the exterior.

“Feliciano, do not tell me you actually love him.”

And his smile changed to something shy, of fear, but also an acceptance to what it could be.

“I-I I... do not know... but...what if I could be?”

Lovino clearly did not like this, with his menacing stare, his hands gripped as if controlling themselves from not swinging his hands against Feliciano’s head.

“How long have you known him? Four, five days?”

“Three days...in a way," he admitted, feeling even more embarrassed.

This did not help with Lovino’s settling anger. “That is not enough time.”

“M-maybe if we spend more time together, maybe...it could be-”

“You shouldn’t even be thinking like that!” And Feliciano fell silent at his sudden scolding tone, his composure falling down as it always did when his father or brother began their usual commands on him, given up and ready for whatever they were to tell him, accept his failure and nod to all the ‘right’ they offered.

“He’s only a traveler that will remain in the city for a short time. Afterwards he will leave and never return. You’ll only be an accessory that went along with the city for him.”

He wanted to prove him wrong, but at the moment, anything he will say will only work to anger him.

“Father will not allow it, I assure you that.” He made his way to leave, but stopped once he remembered something of important detail. “You are engaged and are expected of no other companionship, so I suggest you start getting over this silly and surely short infatuation you have.”

At the mention, Feliciano felt like ripping the flowers in his hands, but only held them tighter, hiding his face between them to shield his face for if he felt like crying.

“She is coming to the castle tonight, behave and act accordingly.” And he had left him, only but the footsteps echoing across the halls serving in his company. And yet Feliciano still stood in his place, holding still to the flowers, not even the beautiful colors working to soothe him from a reminder that even who he was to be with was done for him. He knew well not to go against the wish of his father in this aspect, since it concerned bringing a good heir to the family, maybe one that could even get the throne of the empire in the future. He sigh in defeat, settled, for he knew in the inner parts of his soul that what his brother said was true. He was just another one of the sites in the city for Ludwig, nothing else, and it hurt to realize that.

As promised, Ludwig had made his way to the palace, quite later than the early morning of yesterday.

Seeing as much of his ‘nicer’ clothes had already been worn, he settled with something simple, airy and allowing him much more space for his limbs to move ahead quicker. He found himself excited, with a grin on his face that Aldrich had noticed as he left the inn. He had to make sure that he hadn’t taken a drink of wine instead of water, for he thought it was surely his head messing with him.

Ludwig had expected for just another empty and normal day in the palace, like it had been yesterday. He did not expect this amount of visitors, exquisitely dressed as the many times Ludwig had come, feeling inferior once again as he made his way up into the palace alongside them. The guards didn’t mind as he came in, Feliciano probably told them about his coming. They opened and offered to him like any of the more prestige guests.

In the crowd he tried to find Feliciano, but could only spot the mess of curls that was Augustus’s hair. The emperor had noticed him then, a waving hand, making his way towards him. He seemed surprised, but it did not stop his welcoming smile.

“Ah, my son must have invited you to come.”

“Yes, if you don’t mind of course. It is your palace your majesty.”

“Nothing to worry boy. Now I feel bad for not haven’t sent a message for your father to come.”

“Surely you can invite him another time.” His eyes continued to wander around the room, hoping to find if maybe even that single curl.

It was obvious to Augustus what he was doing, so he decided to help him. "Feliciano!" He called, the boy instantly turning, his worried stare changed into his ever so adoring smile. He quickly halted his conversation with another fellow and quickly headed close to Ludwig, dressed in new attire, as handsome as ever. Ludwig was left stunned. What was he dressed so nicely for?

"You didn't tell me you invited Ludwig."

"Well, I invited him mostly as a whim, hoping to spend some time together in the palace. I have forgotten about the feast."

A feast? So there was something, but what?

"How could you forget about-"

"Come Ludwig, you must try the wine they have for today." Before Augustus could continue, Feliciano was already dragging him to where everybody was fetching their drinks from, a little corner just for themselves, while many others still continued on conversing, surprisingly paying no mind to the young prince and his new friend.

"I could come another day if you wish."

"No, please stay, right now I appreciate you here." He sounded almost begged, getting their glasses and filling them with enough of the alcoholic drink they would need for the evening.

"What is this all about?" He asked, being handed his prepared drink.

"I rather we avoid me giving this explanation. Please, I want you to see more of the palace." Taking his arm with him, he led him out to another deep hall into the rooms that seemed more private to the ruling family. Ludwig didn't even think he should be there, but Feliciano distracted him away from those thoughts, asking Ludwig continuously about the architecture, the colors and the paintings that adorned, all to which Ludwig answered in admiration, pointing out details and giving his own interpretation of what it meant or why it was formed. Feliciano loved to hear them, even if he could be wrong in some cases, but he had no problem with explaining.

It remained like that for their circular stroll, talking of the structure of the building, of stories they heard of gods which had to do with the painted mural, Ludwig talking of his own gods and how they could be similar to Feliciano's. There was no fight as to their beliefs, but learning and new inspirations.

They distracted with their conversation enough to forget about the party that continued in the center of the palace. Feliciano made sure that they never found themselves in the area, really wanting to forget what all this was for. Ludwig himself forgot to question, but their lonely strolling wouldn't last for the whole night as they wished and Feliciano did have duties to attend to. A guard had come rushing to find him, Feliciano letting go of his tight hold on Ludwig's arm to not let suspicion arise. He had mentioned that Eugenia had arrived. Feliciano nodded, excusing himself to Ludwig and heading out to meet this woman.

With not much to do, Ludwig decided on following them back to the feast, taking a corner for himself to watch the welcome of this lady.

She came with her own set of guards, many, as well as her family, her mother and father by the looks of it. Augustus, along with Feliciano and Lovino were set to welcome them, given each member their own greet. When it was Feliciano's turn to greet Eugenia, he held her hands the longest, surely giving her wonderful compliments, seeing as the young girl blushed and smiled in appreciation to his words. They were expected to be by each other the entire time, Feliciano not wanting awkwardness between them and finding any little thing to continue having his mouth open, coming out with all different kinds of topics that the girl only added to with quick comments or nodding.

Once they were all properly seated, Augustus and the girl's father came with an announcement that shook Ludwig to a state of despair.

The girl was to be Feliciano's future wife, their engagement then decided, which was then received with loud applauses and even a smile by the couple. Ludwig held a tight grip on his hands, surely marks left behind by the sudden anger the enveloped him.

He noticed the quick stare Feliciano gave him, and as to not worry him, clapped and grew with a smile like every other in the crowd. But Feliciano could see past that.

In the last few days he had met the Germanic, he came to realize when his smiles were true, and this one indeed wasn't. He got an idea why, and afraid of what conversation later awaited with him, looked away and decided to focus on the crowd, on the dress of his future wife, which he complimented, both of them conversing on the fabric, where she had gotten it and the details she got on how it was made. Although she was exceptionally kind, his conversations with her weren't as fulfilling, and even he couldn't keep words coming along, leaving them in silence as they began speaking mainly with their own family members.

It was beginning to get late, Eugenia was then insisted to return with her parents to her place of stay and in a way Feliciano was relieved. In her presence, it was like the one of his family, just another façade of actions that he had to showcase to prove to his people of his fake happiness.

With his father and brother distracted with other nobles, he swiftly left them, back to the space he had last seen Ludwig. He had run to that area in bubbly excitement, a bigger smile than the one he could give to his betrothed. But he was not awaiting him there as he wished. There was utter hurt in the boy's eyes as he searched all around him.

Since he couldn't find him in the feast, he settled deep into the palace, down the halls they had just explored. He was just about ready to give up until he met him by the terrace where they had conversed his first visit to the palace. He was slouched against the wall, looking over to the darkening sky, actually taking his time to acknowledge the circus that lay right below them. It was empty of spectators, but men were cleaning and preparing it for other races. He paid special attention to them, to all the things they fixed, wanting his mind to remain there, reminding himself of the race he saw just the day before, anything but the prince who slowly approached him.

"Their-their bringing new items," Feliciano managed to say, somehow shy as he approached him, leaning alongside him. "For the next races, which is a pity since they'll just be destroyed."

But even so Ludwig remained silent, only but a breath the only sound he made. "You're engaged?"

Feliciano knew he was going to ask that, his fingers tracing across the wall for he couldn't look at him. He felt like he had betrayed the man.

"Yes..." he quickly admitted.

Ludwig expected as much. Feliciano was handsome, son of the Roman emperor, of course he would be decided a match, to someone as equally beautiful as he was. He didn't understand why he was so disappointed in this. Ludwig was from lands far off from here, lands that the Romans considered to be of barbarians whose only desire was to destroy and take away from their riches. Even if he himself was a prince, his richest did not at all reach the state in which Feliciano and Eugenia were in. In the end, he had nothing to offer to a Roman prince, who had been adjusted to the life of a palace, to dressing in golds and fine fabrics, with servants, food and water at his disposal anytime he wished. Even with Feliciano's desire to leave Rome, he still doubted he would give it up to live in a tribe, in a small house, having to hunt and gather for their needs, giving up his Venus for Wuotan, and accepting their bulky wears, which he thought would just squash Feliciano's small figure.

Why would he even give a thought to this? He avoided the fact that they were both male, that he was even thinking of marriage when he didn't understand his feelings towards him yet. He gazed to him, dedicated to forgetting those thoughts and better admiring the quick friendship they had developed. Yes friendship, even at how attracted he was to his features, glowing eyes that reflected the setting sun, a smile developing on him once noticing that he finally gazed to him, each moving their own way close.

"She is beautiful, seems that she would be loyal and attentive to you," he said, much to disappoint the prince.

"Oh...yes..." he could only answer, not really wishing to continue the topic.

Ludwig must have noticed, then settling with their gaze back to the circus below.

In the silence, in the tranquility, Feliciano was pulled to his broad shoulders, laying his head upon it, as his hands then wrapped around his arm. Ludwig didn't even flinch or mind it, quiet eagerly accepted as he let himself lay his head over his.

Was this a type of closeness normal in Rome? Was he even allowed to spend a moment such as this with the high prince? Well Feliciano didn't pull away, and Ludwig himself didn't even hint to want to be away from him.

"The prince of Rome, engaged, any other piece of information you're keeping from me?" He asked jokingly.

Feliciano had laughed, but also a shy blush arose as he spoke the next words.

“How about my appeal towards you?” Quite bravely he said and it had Ludwig blushing strongly, left without a word to say back as he turned away from him.

It was adorable, earning a round of chuckles from the prince again.

“I should have told you to come another day, I had completely forgotten about the feast.”

“It’s all right, I at least got to meet with you.”

“It was short.”

“Any amount is enough.”

How endearing was Ludwig, how could he hold the redness that continued to arise on him.

“Come to the palace tomorrow, early in the morning, my father will once again leave me out into the city, but there is something I specifically want to see.”

“We saw a lot yesterday.”

“Yes, but what I want to show you is completely new.” For this he neared, only a whisper for him. “It’s outside of the walls.”

“Your father has specifically forbidden you to leave the city. I would be in great amount of trouble if I were to help you escape.”

“I’m not escaping, I just really want to show you something. I assure you we will return once we see it, we just need to leave secretly and for that I need your help.” There was truth and determination in his eyes, and Ludwig though he could let himself trust him about this.

Truthfully, he was curious as to what this could be and just another passing with the prince.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Don't expect me to get any quicker yet...I feel a storm in college work approaching, so the next will take even longer to post, but I already started writing it so that's something. Either way, I hope you enjoy this rather short chapter : 'D

Another early morning at the palace, forming into this sort of routine.

He would wake up along with his father, Roderich still comfortable in his own bed. He would linger through their brought clothes and settled for something that hopefully would impress the prince. Aldrich would give him a comment on his attire, his farewells, and Ludwig was out, just as Roderich would wake up, wondering where Ludwig had gone.

The streets then, sometimes full of people in work, others in stroll, from here to there in the rhythm of the city that Ludwig was beginning to like. It reminded him of how alive it was, but it also made him feel inferior.

Then, the palace would be there for him, this particular morning, empty, only but the guards at the front. They had ushered for him to come up.

Seemed like Feliciano was not coming for him this time.

They lead him in signals, from guard to guard, until they lead them to a room where Augustus seemed to be working in, he wondered by the many scrolls and maps in the room. He most have been awakened from a nap, by how startled he had sat up, eyes widened as he tried to organize some things on the main table, where just moments ago he had his head resting in.

"Ah, Ludwig," he simply greeted.

"Augustus," Ludwig greeted back, taking the usual straight and attentive position that he was beginning to notice he only took when addressing the emperor.

"My son requested another outing into the city, with you as his guard once again."

Ludwig nodded as Augustus organized better some scrolls. Once done, he stood, using his excuse of placing some scrolls in their own shelf near Ludwig just to inspect him close.

What was this interrogation for?

He had no type of weapon, or anything dangerous. He should have known by now that he had no intention of harming his son.

“Did he specify where he wanted to go?”

“No, sir, perhaps he just wants a stroll.”

“Mmm,” he simply nodded, not sure what to ask. “Do you remember my warnings?” Augustus voice had dropped from his keen and even friendlier tone to something that showed of his age, of his worry, of his imperial anger, also reminding Ludwig of who exactly he was standing in front of and who was gazing him all over like a bird out to catch its prey.

“Yes, I do sir,” he answered, like a trained soldier.

Augustus very much liked this, finally omitting a smile after the sudden harsh air that was around them.

“Very well, remember them always, Ludwig. I like you, I really do, but I worry over my son, and I don’t want him putting silly fantasies in your head for you to go along with.” He took his seat, his tone once again commanding and intimidating. “He has to learn his place here in Rome and I hope you help me on setting him straight on that.” Said like an order, one that he wanted results or fulfilled right that instant, with the pointing and the force that could only belong to an emperor.

He couldn’t believe he had only nod, in compliance, when he knew he had a distasteful idea about this locking of the prince. Yet, he did not wish to anger him. He feared that anything would only endanger his chances to continue spending his time with Feliciano.

They heard steps coming closer, tapping eagerly against the floor. Just by even the joy felt, vibrated across the palace, they knew it was Feliciano. Soon he had appeared at the door steps, with a last gush of wind to let the fabrics of his clothes ruffle elegantly. Another short white toga, this time joined with a blue sash across his chest. Ludwig then realized that blue was a color that suited him well.

“Ludwig!” He shouted, running and even embracing the man in a tight hug. If the smaller man had strength, he could have twirled the other in his excited glee. Ludwig embraced him back, quite a smile on his face, which Augustus found odd...yet endearing. He rather not think more of it, he simply tapped on the desk so his son could be aware of his presence there.

“Ah, good morning, father,” Feliciano greeted as eagerly, heading to him to share his own kind of hug, Augustus easily accepting, much stronger and loving than the one Ludwig had reciprocated with. It almost seemed challenging.

Ludwig knew if his own embrace had been any tighter, loving and caressing, it would have just been very suspicious, and he couldn’t have him questioning what he was starting to feel for the prince.

“What are you doing here, Ludwig? I thought we were to meet outside,” he inquired as he came back to Ludwig’s side.

“Your father requested my presence.”

“What for?” He looked suspiciously towards him.

“Just for my warnings. Nothing to worry about, boy.”

He settled with that answer, yet he couldn’t help but feel like there was more to it.

They were wasting time here though, and very quickly, once he was sure Augustus was not to give them any more words, he pulled Ludwig out as hastily as he always did.

In the safety of the outer sun, Feliciano became much more relaxed, even letting go of the other to make their way on easy pace.

“So what did he really tell you?” He asked, for now heading the same direction as they had taken in their first stroll.

“Warnings, as he told you.”

“Did he really?” He seemed worried, fear in his eyes, similar to those of a small pup.

“Yes, there is nothing to worry about.” He tried to get closer to him, hoping for his whispers to be caught in his own ears. “We’re still going to the place you had suggested.”

A darling smile, a melodious chuckle, and even an adoring blush. Feliciano had to cover half his face so his citizens wouldn’t recognize how flushed he grew.

They made their way much in silence, only an occasional hold to keep them together for if the crowds became too heavy.

The route became unfamiliar, an area much deserted, but quite beautiful, meeting more with the woods of the outside walls. No matter who lived in this area, they made sure to keep it colorful, taking care of the flowers and vines that grew into the murals. Ludwig and Feliciano had let their pace slow just so they could admire it, the prince most taken, hands going to caress the few petals he could. Through small alleyways, they slipped between the occasional eye that had seen them, disappeared to mend with the bronze walls that closed and closed. They had reached the end with a hole, only blocked by some rotten planks that Ludwig punched through easily. Feliciano had stopped to admire that strength, the swing, the bulging muscle which flexed as Ludwig tried to relax after the force. Ludwig was waiting for Feliciano to move ahead, but he had been too distracted to do so. One look to him and Feliciano had awakened from his admiration, a smile as he made his way through the hole, outside to the unfamiliar and new dirt.

He let his sandals feel it, drawing patterns against it, letting the dead leaves smooth over the bare skin of his feet. He could have run towards the tree, feel their bark, dance all he could around them, extend and extend to whatever the bending routes could lead. Yet, he waited for Ludwig to come to his side, both of them taking one last glance to the city they were leaving behind.

They wandered deep into the forest, Feliciano stopping many times to make sure of the way he was going, looking for a certain tree, a rock or maybe an old sign.

“If you’ve never been out here, how do you know of this place? How to even get there as well?” Ludwig questioned, noticing the many times Feliciano stopped to try and recall all the steps.

“I’ve heard my servants talk about it often,” he said just as they stopped in a clearing, two old routes continuing, one to the right, the other to the left. Feliciano tried to find the tree with the mark, which he managed to by clearing of it some old branches and leaves. Once done, he knew they had to continue to the left.

“They say this temple has the most beautiful image of Venus. Others in the palace don’t believe so, because they doubt such an image would be left to be forgotten in the woods, but yet, so many of my caretakers speak of it with such truth in their eyes. I’ve been wishing of going for a long time.” Feliciano made sure to be more attentive, for the trees and bushes that covered the path grew, having to move over them or between what tiny space was available.

“I assume they told you how to get there.”

“They couldn’t, they weren’t allowed to, but I overheard them one night as I was making my way to my quarters.”

Ludwig didn’t exactly know how to feel about this. Like those other servants, it did seem preposterous for it to exist, maybe just chit chatter between servants to keep sound alive in the halls of the palace. But he didn’t say a word, he let him continue, let him face it for himself to see if it was true or not.

They continued extensively, the woods around them becoming more savage, already many branches cutting the prince’s silky legs, thighs and arms. He didn’t seem to mind it, until he tripped and grew a severe cut on his knees. He cringed at the pain, settling in the spot as he tried to calm himself. He had never received so many cuts, bites and dirt, the strongest he had received the ones he got from dealing with the gardens in the palace, which were delicate and could easily be dealt with by the servants with special mixtures and herbs.

Ludwig instantly went to his aid. “Are you all right?” He asked, looking around him to see if he had gotten anything much worse. For now, it had only been the single cut on his knee, but without realizing, he let his hand feel around his legs for anything else. Although he found other small cuts, and little bumps, the feel of his legs were still as soft as he seemed, like the petal of flowers Feliciano liked to pick. He let them smooth all over, even slightly to his thighs, and all Feliciano could do was stare, a blush and an intense gaze, settled and compliant to wherever Ludwig wished to go on the treading of his body. Ludwig hadn’t noticed how intimate it had become until he reached the hem of Feliciano’s toga, only a single finger managed under, with quite the temptation to continue upward. Ludwig raised his eyes to meet with his, taken by their intensity, glowing like the gleams of sunshine to join with the orange and brown colors. Feliciano’s lips parted, somehow nervous, but expecting, hands even gripping the dirt under him.

“Lu-” he didn’t let him finish. He quickly stood, bringing the other up with him, dusting him off and settling him to continue as they were.

Ludwig noticed that Feliciano's mood seemed to have dropped then, not as eager as he was moments ago, his movements and pushes of barricading branches slow, to the point that Ludwig had to help him for his strength was not enough.

After many more minutes of walking, Ludwig had been close to sighing in defeat, to tell Feliciano to turn back, for this temple refused to appear to them yet. That was until he felt under his feet the strong surface of a marbled floor, quite sudden, he had to stop, tap it to make sure it was there. It was a clear sign that they were near, or maybe just hiding behind the large veil of a tree that covered much of their way. They had to pull them away like curtains, under them a beautiful shadow of purple, the light behind the ruins continuing further into the forest. Columns were in array, fallen, one or two that still stood tall, even reaching one of the high branches of the large tree that surrounded the entirety. All walls were destroyed, only bits still stood. Parts of a beautiful painted ceiling lay crumbled against many parts of the area, even to the far stream, water running quick and alive like any of the big rivers Feliciano had seen in Rome. It looked so clean and cool, perfect to rip off his toga and settle in, with the view of the true prize of the room.

There was indeed an image of Venus, right in the very center. It was a statue, single and alone, somehow smiling, in glee for the loneliness, yet her arms open seeming to welcome the new visitors. Feliciano, and even Ludwig himself lay in awe at it. Never had they seen an image look more alive and human than this, like a true person that they still awaited to move or to even breathe. Feliciano came close, unafraid, loving how the light touched her skin delectably, making him even feel warmth by it. He spun around it, his hands on the column that held her, taking in the details of her robes, crafted with details of faded golden embroider. It continued to fall on a pile behind her feet, wanting to overflow to the ground he walked.

He did not expect this image to be so beautiful, so real, unlike anything that he had ever seen or could create. He felt a sudden pinch of envy, for he knew his hands could not create something so lively.

He wanted to study it more, every depth, every linen, every extension. He wanted to be capable to do something to compare.

Ludwig didn't move any closer, he let it all for Feliciano to control, all the quietness and space he needed to look for whatever he was looking for.

Tired, Ludwig sat at a still standing block, which he thought would work well as a bank. After the walk they had given, this was an enough relaxation, a perfect stop to still gaze around him, just the right angle to see everything splendor, even the small little pebbles that remained. Feliciano turned to him, and wanting to take a break as well, joined his side, very close, thighs touching, his head lying upon his shoulder, taking his arm and his hands to play. They remained silent, still, Ludwig not minding at all how Feliciano's soft fingers traced every line, every bump or scar in his hands, lovingly. It was not a matter to Feliciano, he still admired those strong and calloused hands.

They remained there for much of the day, sitting close, talking about small details their eyes found from their place. They knew they had to be making their way back, with the sun setting far, becoming dark, and dreadfully Ludwig reminded himself that he didn't bring any torch.

Much to Feliciano's disappointment, they returned, just in time to be able to be led by the faint lights.

They made it back into their escaping hole, into the city, fitting in with the rest of the crowd that were heading home. They both wanted to laugh at how splendid they managed to pull this through, and Feliciano could not halt talking about the statue, about how nice it was to be able to sit close to Ludwig that way, secretly hoping they could return.

With one last kiss, upon his cheek, longer, that had Ludwig fainting his eyes close in delight, Feliciano wished his good bye for the night, hoping for more little escapades like that.

And Ludwig, wanting to have more of that smile for himself, those sweet caresses on his hand and arms, his angelic voice going on about every details in the statue and the crumbled architecture, could not refuse him.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The temple had truly become their temple.

They visited frequently. One day they would waste their time with the statue, and others to explore more of Rome.

Both Ludwig and Feliciano loved the city, and were eager for their strolls, for new foods to try, see new events, meet the people, occasionally a wandering traveler from much more far off places than they could have imagined. There was even a day in which Feliciano spent the day with the rest of Ludwig's family, easily befriendng even Roderich. But they pretty much preferred the loneliness and the serene air that the Venus statue on the outer forests of Rome gave them.

It was always exhilarating, to leave without a trace of suspicion, to a world only for them, a custom and tradition that didn't even needs words the more frequently they came.

Feliciano would sometimes bring with him materials to paint, re-drawing over the already existing old ones, hoping to make them glow anew. In other moments, he would sketch the statue several times on his scrolls, hoping to capture a good angle. Ludwig would just watch him, hand him anything he would need from the near area for when Feliciano wanted to create new paint. They would talk as well, endlessly, and still left with more curiosity as to what they could tell each and learn from the other the next day.

Their feelings were becoming so sure, Ludwig knowing he felt more for him than what he should for a friend or just a passing acquaintance. Sometimes he would lay awake at night, only thinking about Feliciano's smile, the slight tan of his skin that shined the best with the glow of the sun in the temple, by the palace windows, or running down the stairs, eager to see him with such excitement that had the guards worried that he could fall over. He would also think about how close they had gotten...in the literal sense. Their long embraces, kisses on the cheek, leg touching, or maybe even the short of breath Feliciano would get every time Ludwig put his hand on his back or waist, watching that he wouldn't fall or get hurt as they made their usual way through the forest. No matter how Feliciano presented himself in his mind, there was a beat to his heart, maybe a short grin on his face, a blush and even happiness.

Ludwig was not alone in this, for the beloved man that was alive on his mind had the very same thoughts.

Every night, Feliciano would spend his thoughts on the shine of his blue eyes, of the intensity of his stare, of the kindness and dedications on his small and limited touches despite how calloused, stern, and hard as the statue he was.

He was so beautiful, handsome, strong, kind, gentle...

The grip on his sheets would become tighter. He held it close to him, covering his mouth as if trying to shush him from wording anything he wanted to say aloud, of any whines, or even moans that could come out.

Was he disappointed? Disgusted? With how easily he fell to the lust, how strongly he imagined it all, taken in all the strengths Ludwig looked to possess, truly vanquished under the desire that they so both wanted to omit, shown in their eyes for only in their dreams and thoughts for the actions to be done.

A Roman prince, thinking to be submissive and compliant to a lowly barbarian. If come to life, if they really worked on what they wanted, it would be an insult to the ruling family of the empire.

When Feliciano awoke the next morning, sweaty, still tired, out of breath, as if he had been truly awakened by carnal acts, he reminded himself of the consequences that could arise from this. It was a reminder of his position, of why he needed to continue hiding it as much as he could in their presence in the city.

Everything he wanted to do, only for the loneliness of the forest.

He stood, his servants bringing his wear for the day, changing ever so slowly, which was odd, since he had done it in incredible speeds ever since Ludwig started visiting. There was something somber about him as he grabbed and ate his food, made his greetings to his father and brother, and then head out of the palace. It all change the moment he met with the Germanic, at the base of the stairs as always, a rare full smile to greet him, beautiful and enchanting. He seemed to blow up with the happiness he couldn't show that morning, running as per usual down, stumbling as he reached, though rather on purpose, for he wanted to be catch in those arms, held, spun, and then stopped to gaze at each other. Feliciano laughed in the most heavenly of ways, Ludwig with his hands wrapped around him tightly. In the moment only them, like they were already in the forest. But the passing of people, the stare the guards gave them from up above, and Ludwig fearing that one of those eyes could be Augustus, let go, much to the disappointment of the prince. He beckoned him to move, out into the crowds of people, to the hidden parts of the city which between the crumbling old walls they could escape.

The path, although dim, was each time seen some more, making their way sure and quicker. Half way then, when they knew the voices of the city lessened and it could be forgotten to them, their hands would intertwine. No matter the branch, the bush, the rock or even the tree, their hands were locked, continuously both looking to make sure they were still held tight, and that they could continue to be close, seeming more important than making it through without the worry of cuts and bruises.

Feliciano had already been questioned. His excuse being that he had fallen many times, which usually received a roll of the eyes from both his father and brother. Probably then talking about how they were right, how even an outing to the city could cause something like this to the young prince.

They only let go once they arrived to the temple, each continuing with what they had left off the last time they had come.

Ludwig was trying to piece together one of the ceilings, hoping to get a complete drawing, Feliciano writing down some details about the statue, poetry of its beauty. But to be honest, for today, he was rather tired of everything going to the statue. As he looked around him for new inspiration, he realized he rather much work on the Germanic traveler. And thus he began writing, in a very cult form of Latin he knew that Ludwig wouldn't understand. He wrote about his physic, everything he could, preserving his image as if he could disappear that instant. He also wrote about his feelings, everything that seemed to erupt inside him whenever he was around him, his dreams, even debating about how he should act upon it. Sketches decorated the sides of the words, of his dedicated and hard look to the piece he was fixing. From memory he would also try to draw his smile or whenever he gazed at him a way that made his entire figure tremble in delight. Just drawing it was causing the same reaction, having to stop before he turned any redder or Ludwig noticed what he was doing.

He threw his scrolls rather carelessly to the floor, suddenly of no importance as he walked towards him. Instead of sitting beside him as he usually did, he laid behind him, resting on his back like it was boulder meant to rest on. He hummed and had his arms roam the area, quite relaxing to the other. Feliciano was rather light, so there was no heaviness, but soft feathered touches, which wasn't enough to distract him from his work, it just eased it.

"Do you think you'll be done with it soon?" Feliciano asked him, concerning the crumbled painting.

Ludwig had done a good job at getting most of it. It almost did look complete if it wasn't for just the missing corners, but Ludwig was insisting on getting everything. Sadly, some parts were nowhere to be found on the old floors, probably taken by others who passed here before them.

"I don't know," he sighed with such defeat, leaning ever so slightly, Feliciano moving along with him down.

"But you still have a lot of time here...right? Surely by then you'll..." Feliciano had very easily noticed how tense Ludwig had gotten, how the atmosphere called for silence and Feliciano decided to obey it. His hands extended to rest around him, pulling his back closer to him, to nuzzle and to have a better rest.

Ludwig had stayed in Rome for about...two weeks, and his father had recently told him that their stay was meant to be a month long. Sure, they still had another two weeks left of the trip, but the constant reminder that he would leave was there. Feliciano was to marry Eugenia and to stay in Rome, while he was to return to his tribe and choose a bride of his own, then take his father's place as the leader. He didn't think the two weeks left could encompass all he truly wanted to do. He felt like he would leave, no matter the amount of things he did, empty. There was something about Feliciano that brought him life, discovery, and even desire to do just about anything...even come to such a place and try to piece together and old painted ceiling. Feliciano had been the most amazing thing to happen to him in his visit. He didn't know how he could let go of him, forget him, pretend...to love somebody else.

Why was he thinking like this?

He reached his hand up to caress the one Feliciano had against his shoulder, a reassurance that for now he was here, all for himself and for time enough to enjoy. Feliciano's smile grew. He felt how he relaxed, how they both lite up, breathing in tune with the breeze around them, probably ready for a nice nap.

Even if Feliciano did enjoy his usual naps (and Ludwig was slightly annoyed by them), he still had too much energy to cease in a rest. He gazed over then to the pond they had for themselves. It looked clean and cool enough to soothe them from the small heat. He stood quite suddenly, leaving Ludwig in surprise. When he looked back to see where Feliciano was going, he was instead met by a naked back, his robes slowly falling over his rear, then presented to him like it would be in his constant dreams.

Did he shout? Did he gasp? He couldn't even hear. It was like the redness his skin took even reached his ears to cover them. He was paralyzed in immense shock, while Feliciano didn't mind or even notice. He had already ridden of his sandals, placed on top of a broken pillar, then joined by his toga, not caring of his bareness, at ease like it was just another fabric of clothing that he was showing to the other. He turned to Ludwig, and before the other could see more, he gazed to his side, trying to rid of the past images he had seen and of seeing anymore. He though it rude, especially to a prince. A delicacy that he shouldn't even be granted the presence of.

"Why do you turn away?" He asked, coming close, his feet not caring for the small rocks he stepped on. They didn't matter when he wanted to come close to Ludwig...especially like this.

"You-you've rid of your clo-clothing."

"And?"

"Well, it's improper."

"But were going to get into the pond."

The pond? Oh yes, he sometimes forgot there was one there.

Feliciano dared laughed, noticing the strong blush, the trembling, even the childish fear in his eyes.

"We are, aren't we?" Feliciano turned back, settling his feet in the water, no shiver or burn, just right to embrace his feet and ankles. He sigh in delight, turning once again to the other, who was still stuck in his position, still not daring to look.

"Ludwig..." there was a sensual tone to it, a faraway raise of his head that gave the other no choice than to look.

This had to be a dream, a fantasy that his head had concocted. Feliciano was there, fully bare for the sunlight to hit every area that the toga or any of the other clothing he had brought covered. Out, inviting, his hand extended to welcome him in. Like falling to a siren song,

with the prospect of being able to touch that bronze shinning skin, the slim areas of his chest, waist and arms, the voluptuousness of his thighs, legs and rear, Ludwig finally accepted.

While Ludwig began getting rid of his own clothes, Feliciano began to submerge deeper in the water, happily extending all he could so every joint could feel the refresh. This water was heavenly, much so than the baths at the palace. It was the right depth, the ground comfortable, for it was marble, only a couple of rocky edges with broken parts of old temple laying about. As he splashed around, getting closer to them, he had received a sudden idea. What if the missing parts of the ceiling Ludwig was trying to put together were there? He tried to look from what he could above, but none seemed fitting or he just couldn't see them right enough. They would need to go deeper to see. He turned once he heard the water ripple with the joining of another. He though Ludwig would decide to enter with just a simple shirt from his shyness, but instead, he was surprised to see him as bare as he himself was.

His breath easily left him. For the first time he saw those muscles fully like a private gallery. His heavy clothing did a lot to cover the full structure of his well-developed body. Despite how hard, strong and even intimidating they seemed, Feliciano was still left with the heavy desire to tread his fingers all across, for it managed to look soothing and silky.

Ludwig's face still shone red, and he seemed too scared to come any closer into the water, stuck on his sitting spot just at the edge. Feliciano laughed, swimming closer to him, taking his hands to pull him deeper.

"Why do you look so stressed?"

"Well I uh..um..uh it's uh, we-were both uh...naked." He grew even redder.

"It shouldn't be a problem."

"It should!"

"We share the same anatomy, what difference would it make?"

Ludwig wanted to say a lot on accord to that.

Yes, they were both men and shared some common features, but in form and shape, they were very different, to a certain way that just made them more attracted to the other, beautiful and unique. Yet, he was led easily to the deeper areas of the pond, having to paddle his feet to keep himself rightly afloat.

"There is nothing to worry about, it's just us."

Indeed it was just them, alone, naked and swimming close to each other on a single pond. Feliciano paid no mind to those details, still easing him close until they reached the other edge, where the pieces of rock and marble were now seen to him. He understood then why Feliciano wanted him to get in, and thus he began to examine those pieces he could. The ones clear and reachable were not part of the painting he was working on, so they had to dive in for far more, which Feliciano already took a head start to. He was eager to do this ever since he dragged Ludwig inside.

There was still enough sunlight to help them search, both in their own self assigned spots, finding images between broken images and none seemed to be fitting. They resurfaced each time for breath, before diving back in, swimming past each other, giving them each a new light to how their bodies move, how light reflected on their skins, hair flowing about, and then the adoring smile Feliciano gave him whenever Ludwig stared too much and even forgot which piece or area was he supposed to check next.

Feliciano enjoyed from the space to move, swimming all around every corner he could, for the fun of it, resurfacing sometimes without a piece, but just wanting to relax, breathe in and out and enjoy from the coolness of the water that surrounded him completely. He couldn't leave Ludwig to do this on his own though, and once he had the reminder, of Ludwig resurfacing after his last check, his back arising like the very sunshine, water dripping down it like a rocky waterfall, Feliciano would submit below to make it seemed like he was working as hard as he was...also to hide his own blushing cheeks.

Ludwig had arisen to check a large one he found, not it either. He threw it over to a pile of other rocks he checked, diving back in, once a piece of blue caught his eye. It was deep, hidden well under a much larger boulder. With just a simple push, he was able to take it, finally the images of stars in it. He arose back into the air, just to make sure, the sun light approving of it. He had found one of the two missing pieces! Now he needed to tell Feliciano.

Speaking of which, he had just arising from the surface as well, holding his own very blue piece. But it wasn't the other piece that held interest to Ludwig, it was the way Feliciano had come back up, how their bodies closely touched, how he had one arm on his shoulder, wrapped nicely to cover most of his back, his head laying upon Ludwig's own forehead, breathing in and out heavily as he tried to catch his breath after the last long swim he had taken. Ludwig began to breath as he did, mostly out of nervousness, because Feliciano was indeed close, hanging from him, breathing the very air he exhaled, smiling and even getting nearer.

Both still holding their respective pieces, Feliciano proceeded to wrap his other arm around his shoulders, having a better grasp, a better closeness and a better way to just stare into his eyes. Ludwig fell into the flow, letting them both sway together softly in the water, as he had both his arms wrap around his waist, pulling him even tighter to himself.

"Seems we both found the last two pieces," Ludwig finally said, not wanting things to be so silent, afraid of what it could grow into if it dared continue.

"Um...uh, yeah." That was the first time Ludwig had actually seen Feliciano grow nervous enough as to stutter, so he couldn't help but chuckle, loving how the tables have turned, how confident he himself stood, protective, as he was the one with more bulging skin to cover all of Feliciano's more delicate one. Feliciano smiled himself, and afterwards they let themselves enjoy from the silence, only the breeze they let play and the ripples of the water they continuously moved as they seemed to dance in it.

They rested then, Ludwig laying slightly on an old pair of stairs that continued down into the water, Feliciano on top of him, the same loving gaze still, his hands now resting upon his chest, legs intertwined in what they could with the taller man. Only breaths were exchanged.

They seemed so afraid to speak, not sure entirely why they were holding to the other this close, far over the limits that kept them only as friends.

“We shouldn’t be doing this,” Ludwig finally acknowledged, even managing to let his hands fall off from his side, just when the temptation to run his hands down his thighs became really appetizing.

“Why not?” Feliciano dared ask, leaning his head to the side with deep confusion...like it wasn’t obvious already.

“Y-you’re the prince and I am just a tribesman. You’re engaged, I probably will as well. We’re only supposed to be friends and this is not proper behavior as such. We probably don’t even-” he couldn’t continue, he honestly thought he was just embarrassing himself. He looked away, which only drove Feliciano to stare on just as he did, coming closer.

No, no, no, no, no, he wasn’t supposed to be getting this close, he wasn’t supposed to still lay on his thighs, run his hand over him and look at him like...that!

“I don’t think it should matter right now.”

“Of course it should, your father-” he was silenced by the laying of a finger on him, quiet like it was a force of nature to keep the order of this forest.

“He’s not here right now.” Feliciano let his hand fall, very slowly down his jaw, neck and back to its place on his chest. “No one is here. Your own father, Antonio, Lovino, Roderich and Eugenia are far from our every reach, without knowledge to this place.” He now practically sat on his lap. “It’s just us, and right now, us is all we know and can be here. Forget our titles as princes, forget Rome, forget Germania, forget everything away from here.” He reached his hands up, one to caress at his jaw, the other at the back of his neck.

“It’s...” he leaned, deliciously. “Just...” fingers caressing the welcoming and calling lips. “Us...” one last breath and any other was blocked by the pressing of his lips to his.

Ludwig had finally taken his advice and didn’t oppose any longer. He eagerly kissed back, all refusals disappearing from his mind, leaving his body weak, compliant to what he truly wanted behind all his excuses. To have Feliciano as he was, for himself, in his arms, kissing him, all the rest forgotten as they only wanted to focus on the passion they had finally let free from their internal hiding.

Still in the pond they made into their bed, they continued to mend and caress, only breaking for breaths, to gaze into their eyes, looking for regret or maybe disappointment, a clue to stop.

There was none. This was how both the men wanted exposed their desire to each other, lips continuously meeting and all kinds of emotions spreading all across their bodies, seeming to pull not just their lips and bodies, but even their souls.

The worry of returning on time was forgotten, that they were still naked didn’t matter, that the day was beginning to darken and the pond was starting to get colder, it was nothing when

they still produced their own heat. Ludwig could finally thread his fingers on his thighs, Feliciano could through his hair and feel more of the very amazing chiseled body, exciting the still ongoing kiss. They couldn't find it in them to stop, they couldn't dispart from each other. It was like a special spiritual string had glued them together, forever in this great bliss that neither minded...but they just couldn't stay in the water for the rest of it.

Red faced, their minds still in a haze, hypnotized by their stares and their still wish to continue, they managed to move out back into the solid floor, trying to dry themselves as best as they could by shaking like dogs and wolves, hoping for the afternoon sun to help along in the rest.

Ludwig remembered the two pieces which both still held. Once dried, Ludwig settled with simply wearing one of his lighter tunics, Feliciano already with his single toga, arms wrapped around Ludwig lovingly, head laying on his shoulder as Ludwig finally put the last two pieces on the painting, finally completing it.

It was an image of gods dancing around a clear night sky, enjoying from a feast, each by their own designated star, quite beautiful despite its age and older style, Feliciano admitted.

"You did an amazing job," he complimented.

"Thank you." And the rest of the silence was settled in both of them analyzing the painting right, trying to figure out the styles, the colors, what was it meant to signify. Feliciano wanted to fill in entire scrolls with that information, but with the happiness and comfort of being this close to Ludwig, plus the still lingering dream state after their first kiss, what Feliciano wanted the least was to let go. Ludwig himself didn't want him to, and as a way to try and keep him close still, he lay them both to rest by a still standing wall, sloped slightly to make them feel like they were resting in any of their beds back in their own homes.

It was hard, and yes, slightly uncomfortable, but for both of them it didn't matter, not when they had their arms wrapped around each other, Feliciano settled on the crook of his neck, Ludwig's fingers threading on his hips, toga going up and down with the touch.

"You have an incredible amount of patience to be able to complete something like that," Feliciano managed to say, tracing one of the designs in Ludwig's tunic.

"Interest and curiosity as well, I really wanted to see what it was."

"Even with my own interest and curiosity, I couldn't finish something with so many broken pieces."

Ludwig said no more as his gaze returned to it. It was truly in that moment that he realized that to any other it could have been a hard task, yet he managed in the times they had come here.

Feliciano, beginning to get somehow envious of the attention Ludwig was giving to another work of art that wasn't his own, brought out his own sketch scrolls and books, easily opening and bringing them close for Ludwig to see. Ludwig took them and watched, with Feliciano laying patiently at his side, eyes focused solely on any emotion he could show on his face.

He saw interest, impression, all the same looks he gave to all the new things he had seen in this visit to Rome. He took the time Feliciano wanted him to, truly taking in every line, every shadow, identifying people and buildings he had seen in their usual outings into the city. He drew many women, as real as if they were truly there, some fruits, made his own style of columns and arches, and then, there were the sketches of himself. Just as real, like he was looking at a mirror, only that it heightened many of his dominant male features, like his jaw, chin, muscled arms and chest, and of course, his thighs. It was surprising how Feliciano got all these details right...seeing as they only saw each other naked for the first time just moments ago.

He looked to him, their faces close, his gaze continuously moving from his eyes to his lips, still tempted, yet he still demanded an explanation.

“You are the perfect image of a man,” Feliciano said with a ferocity of passion, yet still, only gripping his tunic tighter, slightly embarrassed he boldly told him something like that. “I had to capture you for my memory, I wanted everything I could from you...before we depart and I won’t see you again.” The saddened look in his eye, which erased the passion all completely, his grip even loosening, his head yet laying on his shoulder comfortably.

“I’m here now, aren’t I?” He couldn’t deal with him making such a face, he wanted it back in it’s beautiful red, those glowing eyes looking at Ludwig like the majesty of a god.

He placed the sketches on a safe place before all his attention settled back on him, and instantly did their lips crash yet again, continuing a feat of desire they wanted back ever since they left the pond.

Still leaned against the wall, they feasted on the taste, on the softness, of mending saliva that wetted and made their lips flush even more, which only helped to make the kiss more desirable. Ludwig kept worrying that there would come a moment where he wouldn’t have the energy, or even Feliciano. But every time they stopped for a breath, there was only want for more, and to both their surprises, they managed to continue on.

Ludwig would sometimes move to kiss his neck and shoulders, and Feliciano would even moan, his hands holding tight on his hair, pushing him against his skin to do more. Ludwig would let his hands caress at his hips, at his thighs, his chest and lean arms, and Feliciano did the same, lingering more, feeling the strength, the potent, rejoice on the chance to touch such a body.

They remained and continued like this until the fading light reminded them that they should stop, that they should return, fix themselves appropriately and come into the city pretending they hadn’t shared something so intense.

They were indeed disappointed, and as Ludwig dressed back into everything he had originally brought, they were so close to just laying there for the rest of the night and forgetting about the city. But they couldn’t test Augustus’s trust...whatever Ludwig still could of it.

Hand in hand, as they have done so every time they came here, they left back into the trail of the forest, back into the city where they let go, only walking side by side with enough space.

They still chatted, with blushes, with taken smiles, for no matter the topic of conversation, their minds were still in their moment. It was so even when Feliciano kissed his cheek good night, Ludwig hoping for a one last chance at his lips, but guards were watching.

Even that night, both replied what had happened in their dreams. Even in the morning, their eyes were in a daze, elsewhere as they dealt with things with their own families.

All they wished was to return back, return to their embrace, return to that kiss and to that world alone for them.

Chapter End Notes

So recently I read that Germanics used to rock some amazing beards. It was customary for young Germanics (like Ludwig) to vow to never cut their beard until they killed an enemy. The romans were both terrified...but turned on by them. So now I feel bad for not including this bit. Imagine Ludwig with the most majestic beard, an amazing beard, and Feli just wants to touch it.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Two months later, I finally post. I'm so sorry for the time it took. First it was the heavy work from finals, then it was the going out with friends and families because of holidays, which didn't give me enough time to write. But I finally updated and I hope you enjoy this chapter! I'll see if I can be quicker in the short free time I have.

A feast was coming soon. Ludwig didn't know for what, but it seemed like an important and grandiose one.

The entire city was preparing for it, not only the rich and powerful, but also the poor, who were just as lively. Usually many foreigners came, with a clear chance to see a senator, one of the princes, and the emperor himself, who each would be distracted by the preparations and the eagerness to participate. Their chances of being targeted were greater by these times and because of this there was more supervision by the guards all across the city as the days of preparation progressed.

Many countless of times, Ludwig and Feliciano tried to make it through the known alley, only to meet with guards watching them with intent eyes. It was impossible to leave without having a pair or three following them across the area, the barbarian and the prince having to turn and act like they were going to the last minute place they thought of.

It didn't help at all when Feliciano waved and greeted them, even as they walked down the upper areas of Rome, making them obvious even far from their usual escape.

They were now truly stuck in the city, thus they had to spend their time finding something new to do.

They joined people in any games they witnessed in the streets, watched new circus races, visited the temples, and Feliciano helped Ludwig with getting new clothing.

Ludwig had having given up to the toga wearing, which he admitted was indeed comfortable and wasn't beginning to mind wearing it to the city often. Although yes they did have their fun and they liked witnessing the architecture, the culture and the art...it was not what they truly wanted with the time of their presence.

They both knew that in the city they had to show a certain façade, one that they were both starting to tire of. They were desperate for long loving embraces or even just a short kiss goodbye.

Oh no! That wouldn't be enough.

They wanted their caress, their bodies against each other, rubbing, kisses all over, their moans, their loving gazes, their unique loving smile for each, their tight hold, the threading of fingers across each other hairs, and above all, just the freedom to be each other, speak and do without the pressure of the people around them. It even pained them when they did touch but could not go any further. When they found even a small chance to kiss, a passerby would catch them and they had to depart, with a longing that continued in their sleep, always a hidden reach that so desperately wanted to hang on.

There was only a week left in Ludwig's trip and already his father and Roderich had told him about getting items for their trip back. What agony to know that soon all the time they had would be over, departed and who knows when they will meet again, without the chance then to be with each other as they wished. He tried to push the thought aside as he spent the days walking with Feliciano, rather focusing on their present and all the grandness of Rome he knew he was going to miss as well.

This particular day, Ludwig had an odd request to spend it at the soldier training camps.

Despite the many times Augustus suggested him to go, and how interested Ludwig was indeed of going, he didn't find time until today. With guards posted at every available corner and their exit to the woods practically covered by them, they had a lot of time to spend in the city, and after seeing most of everything, he felt curious as to how their soldiers trained and battled and finally took the emperor's offer. He had told Augustus as he met him that morning, picking up Feliciano as he usually did.

News arrived quickly and the camp prepared for his visit. Not necessarily because of Ludwig but because he was coming with the prince. Feliciano seemed fearful to go, holding to Ludwig's arm tightly, shaking their entire walk to the area.

A group of three men had been awaiting them, standing proudly by the entrance, no emotion of excitement or even curiosity in their faces. They easily identified the prince with his rich wear and small likeliness to the emperor, and they assumed the taller man that he was holding tightly to was the Germanic. They didn't seem to mind their closeness, just welcomed them in and gave Ludwig their wear, suggesting he changed into it before they started with his training.

Wait...they wanted him to go out there with only this cloth for his bottom? Sure, it gave easier movements and was fresher for the heat of the day, but it meant being almost bare to all these men, plus an easier change for him to get cut or bruised.

While Feliciano was brought over to a watching area so he could be safe from the occasional savage blows the soldiers gave, Ludwig headed off to some distant corner to change. His face, along with his entire body blushed as he finally showed himself in the field, shaking and even tugging more at his cloth so it could cover more of his legs. The rest of the men didn't seem impressed. Each had their own chiseled body, as expected of their position in the army plus their endless amount of training. It seemed like Ludwig was just another one of many, fitting along well with the rest there. Feliciano, who had countless of shirtless and well-formed men to look at, only stared in awe at Ludwig, with dreamy eyes, leaning his head, surely in the memory of when he had all that on top of him, kissing and touching.

With Ludwig now officially there to join them, he was given a mentor, at his equal height and seeming just as powerful as he was. He eyed him from top to bottom, even walked around him, finding any imperfection that could hinder his movements and eventual fighting stands. Once he made sure, he proceeded to give Ludwig a quick overview on their marches, their runs, which they immediately started once he was done talking. Ludwig managed to keep up greatly, always by his mentor's side, sometimes even advancing him. It was all amazing for Feliciano to watch. No, it wasn't simply because Ludwig looked so handsome under the harsh sun, sweat coating him, all his body free under actions that heightened their use, but also because how successful Ludwig was already being in just the start, enjoying it and learning more of their ways. Augustus had been right, he had it in him to be another good soldier in their armies, one that could even reach the height of a centurion.

A centurion, then...maybe that would finally give Feliciano a chance to marry him instead.

He shook his head at such thoughts, his mind back to Ludwig's training, soon to finish his run and really begin with battle techniques.

Ludwig was handed a wooden sword and shield, worn by many other practices like these. Quickly they sparred, Ludwig showing his mentor the tricks he already knew from what he learned in his tribe. His mentor had admired them and even though them helpful, but a trip, a smack against his shoulder proved that it wasn't enough. After this, he began to show Ludwig more of moves and styles of their own, step by step, hoping Ludwig could learn by copying every movement. Ludwig was quick to go along with them, adding his own force and style, feeling more confident, thus sparring once again with a genuine force that it almost seemed like they were truly out in the empire fighting.

It was beautiful for Feliciano to see. Their swords and shields, wooden as they were, moved across the fields like art, like dance, an occasional blow against skin, a cry of anguish that reminded Feliciano of the intensity, of the danger, of the ruthlessness his people had that Augustus sometimes tried to hide from him. The old, shredded and dirty rags, even the dust rising into the air didn't impose on how graceful and powerful they looked.

Despite every technique being new to Ludwig, he took them into his control easily, many now joining in the joint battle for a chance to fight him, Ludwig easily bringing them to exhaustion or even hurting them enough to give bruises. He thrust his sword into his enemy in great precision, his arm extending beautifully, putting all those wonderful built muscles to use and giving more for Feliciano to swoon. That particular movement only fed the intimate desires in Feliciano's mind. All that sword thrusting, bare body flexing in harsh movements, it made Feliciano wonder if Ludwig would do the same to him in a more loving and desirable way that would leave them just as exhausted, but in more pleasurable euphoria. Feliciano couldn't believe he was thinking such a way out of the comforts of his bedroom. Not in a lonely night, but in a bright day, with several others beside him. He should really focus instead on the techniques, on their battle strategies, anatomy for future painting references, and as a prince that depended on their protection and richness they fought for further in the empire, he should feel as proud as his father was of their armies.

The men, especially Ludwig, had the energy to continue through the night if they wanted, but they had their regulations and it was best they followed them to not be strained and let the

bruises they got in their practice heal and get mended. Even as many the men stopped, Ludwig still battled on, releasing a primal wish to fight on, to battle all that he couldn't in his rather mundane little tribe back in his province where he was expected to stay and simply watch over it. It wasn't until he received a rather harsh blow by another wooden sword against his head, kneeling down to the ground, did he stop, groaning and trying to rub off the pain from the area.

"Retire for the night," his mentor called out to the rest of the men, including Ludwig. He helped Ludwig up, who was now feeling all the blows he had been given.

The rest of the soldiers went to change and to put their faux weapons back in their place, Ludwig was to do the same, even Feliciano, who was excitedly going over to him to congratulate him and take some last glimpses of the handsome man like he was. Ludwig was halted by the mentor, a proud smile on his face, which surprised Ludwig immensely.

"You possess great strength, one that I myself envy."

Feliciano stood some paces back as he let them speak, but he was close enough to hear the conversation, feeling as proud as it was for himself.

"Did you practice back in your tribe?"

"Many times in the week, with my brother and others in our group."

"Were you a soldier over there too?"

"We don't have armies or such positions. We just train what we can to protect our lands and people."

The mentor nodded in understanding. "A pity. In Rome, your name would have been glorious, riches, all kinds of gift from senators, even a possible position as emperor."

This was all rather flattering, but a position as an emperor was going too far. He really admired Rome, but he did not possess that much knowledge in their politics to rule the entire empire. It was somehow fearsome even, he didn't know how Augustus could manage. Then again, Augustus was born into the empire so he probably had an idea on how the ruling worked even before he was chosen by the emperor.

They wished each other farewells and Ludwig was once again by Feliciano's side.

"You really did an amazing job," the smaller complimented, a slight blush on his face, but a continuous and confident smile.

"Thank you. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll be changing. I still don't feel comfortable in this." He turned back to the area where he left his original clothing, feeling Feliciano's heavy eyes. He looked back to capture him, but the other had quickly turned, smiled, hands united and extended to prove his innocence. Ludwig glared, continued, and once again felt his eyes all over him. This time he didn't do anything about it, he only smiled and for once felt proud of the body he possessed.

Changed and back into the streets, Ludwig and Feliciano walked aimlessly. With the sun about to set, the city was dealing with the last preparations for the festivities tomorrow before it darkened. Not even Ludwig felt concerned with the lateness, and thus didn't beg Feliciano to return to the palace at once. Feliciano had already stayed later in the city, mostly the days when Feliciano joined his family in their touring and Augustus hadn't seem to mind as long they were with each other.

They reached the very same bridge they had stopped in the first time they had walked through the city like this. It still offered one of the best views and Feliciano loved to lean down and stare on, hoping for a glimpse of something new they hadn't seen already.

"Did you really like your training?" Feliciano asked, quite suddenly after the quick rest he had taken in silence.

Ludwig honestly thought he was going to take a nap right there. "I did, more so than I though. I felt tempted to even join."

It was just feeding Feliciano's ideal of Ludwig staying, of growing to be a centurion, and then allowed marriage to him. "Then stay and do it!" Feliciano suggested eagerly, even standing and facing Ludwig directly.

Ludwig was taken by it, but it wasn't enough to faze him. "I can't. I'm expected to be king of my tribes when I return. I cannot leave them behind."

Oh yeah. It just proved to Feliciano that his ideal would only remain a dream. They had duties, they had plans made for them, and he knew Ludwig would be loyal to his.

"How long till you leave?" He dared ask, looking away back to the setting sun.

"A couple of days," Ludwig admitted, leaning down to the bridge beside him as he was, taken by the same view.

Feliciano sigh, sadness and disappointment evident for even Ludwig to hear.

"We'll make the most of it till then," Ludwig said in hopes to cheer him, even placing a calming hand on his shoulder. It was a small touch, but enough to cause all kinds of wonderful chills across the prince's body.

"Were you trained as well to fight?" Ludwig asked hoping to better the mood between them.

"My father preferred that I wasn't. He knew my chances of getting hurt were more if I was trained as a soldier."

"So you know no defense skill?"

Feliciano shrugged, "I do not think so."

Ludwig didn't know if he should mention this, but he brought himself to say it out of impulse. "And you dared want to run away like this."

Feliciano pouted, but didn't get mad or saddened. He understood his point. Sometimes he found himself wondering what would have happened if he had made his way out of Rome that day, if he really would have been captured for a ransom, killed, or abused because he didn't know how to fight. He really needed to learn something.

He still desired to leave, but next time, he wanted to be more prepared...if he ever did find a chance to try and leave again.

"I'll teach you," Ludwig said suddenly, quite out of nowhere as Feliciano let his mind space.

Feliciano looked surprised, standing straight immediately, a sort of fear in his eyes, knowing and realizing that he would have to hold and wield a weapon like he saw the men do earlier. Not just hold them, but use them with a strength that he wasn't sure he could get in the small time he had with Ludwig.

Could he really do all that? Could he be able to protect himself as he wished and show that he could go out there?

"I...I don't think..." Feliciano trembled, clearly nervous, hands caressing around him as he tried to relax and really think about it. "I don't think I'll be able to be good enough," he admitted.

"It does not matter, I said I'll teach you, the purpose is that you learn if even the slightest amount to protect yourself."

Silence continued as Feliciano still thought on with the same questions, eyes back to the city hoping it could help him to accept, still not sure if he could be brave enough to be even the slightest of what Ludwig hoped.

"Where?" His big curious eyes came to Ludwig and the Germanic took that as an acceptance.

He began to think of places, the only reasonable one where they wouldn't be disturbed being the abandoned temple. Feliciano thought of the same place, wondering how they could make it there without being noticed by the growing number of guards around.

"Tomorrow night," Feliciano suggested.

"At night?" The forest could get pretty dark even at dawn. He couldn't imagine in the pure darkness of the night.

"Tomorrow is the festival. The guards would be more preoccupied with the large crowds near the palace and temples, leaving our escape free for the night. We'll take torches to light up our way and the temple."

"What about your father? Surely he'll be wondering where you went in the night."

"He'll be too busy with the festival. He'll at least know I'm with you so he won't be as worried."

He hoped he didn't. He didn't know how long in the night they could manage, but he had to make sure to bring him back to the palace before the sun arose.

It was decided then and no other changes were brought up.

They then spoke of other things as they made their way back to palace as per usual, walking side by side, their hands so many times brushing each other in hopes for a private chance to hold. With the palace in sight, Ludwig knew it was time for his usual good bye, but was rather surprised instead to have Feliciano pull him up the steps instead. This was a good enough excuse to hold his hand, and they both used it, Ludwig not minding as much to be inside the palace. The servants, maids and slaves did not mind either, quite used to his presence with the prince. What they did mind was Feliciano bringing him too deep into the palace, to their living quarters, private places that only they as servers to the imperial family were allowed to be in.

Feliciano made sure to keep his hand tight in Ludwig's when no eyes were near. When they were, he simply kept signifying with his hand, then running down excitedly like a child, Ludwig having to hurry his steps behind him, the prince laughing and continuing to run as if they were playing a game. He finally stopped, leaning against a wall right next to an opening that he assumed was the prince's room. It had to be, for the largeness, the rich fabrics on the bed and on the curtains, the designs that the prince surely made himself on the walls, the countless amounts of painting and sculpting accessories, as well as scrolls half open to reveal notes or lyrics for music.

Feliciano seemed tired by his running, but still smiled and laughed, his tiredness not hindering him from his glee. He finally had Ludwig alone, leaning towards him, knowing of their loneliness, of what they can share if even for a couple of seconds. They used it for a kiss, lips meeting and embracing each other like they had been lost lovers who haven't seen each other in decades. Ludwig had to wrap his arms around him, as a reminder that he was there, holding and kissing him finally, same for the young prince, whose hands rejoiced on the skin of his neck and his soft hair.

They stopped once they heard the distant noise of footsteps coming closer, standing away by each other enough to not be suspected, but still close enough to continue, but this time they instead settled on their gazes.

Feliciano seemed to still want more, even his hand reaching to pull Ludwig's tunic, glancing to his room, expecting, wanting, but Ludwig knew he could not dare.

Of course Feliciano pouted and slumped down in disappointment, but he understood. His servants would be checking him anytime soon, and it wouldn't be ideal to have the Germanic with him in the throws that he tended to dream about.

"Tomorrow, try to bring any weapon that could suffice for your training."

Feliciano nodded, already wondering what he could bring.

Ludwig left one last kiss on his lips, to remember and to feel across the night. It was enough for Feliciano, who still remained in his spot, watching as Ludwig made his way hurriedly out

as soon as heard the footsteps much closer.

Feliciano stayed breathless in his spot, hands on his lips, from there moving to his neck and chest, hoping he could rub more of that taste around him. He was already in bliss, somewhere so out like this, that even a near servant saw.

“Your highness, are you all right?” And like he was awakened by a dream, he startled himself up and made himself as proper as he could in seconds with a servant.

“Qui-quite fine,” he said and made his way into his room, hoping to distract himself with some paintings, and also thinking about that weapon he was to bring tomorrow for his quick training.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Well I consider to have updated quick, I don't know if I'll continue that way, I'm still pretty busy with other things. I will start and work on the next chapter when I can. I hope you enjoy this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ludwig later learned that the festival was meant to celebrate the founding of Rome. No wonder the importance of preparations they gave it in the past few days.

The city was already lively in the early morning when Ludwig had gone to get supplies in the markets, only intensifying as the day progressed and Ludwig started ordering in his head how his training with Feliciano would go. He hoped the entrance would be as free as the prince had told him, hoped that whatever Ludwig taught him would suffice, and that they would return with enough time to not cause much suspicion.

When he returned to the inn, both his father and cousin were prepared for the festivities, with fine wear they bought recently in the city.

“Are you going to join the festival?” His father asked, tying well the sash he had around him.

“Much later.”

Ludwig went to a corner where they had most everything ready for their trip back, placing the things he had just bought in what order he could in the pile.

His father and even Roderich seemed rather disappointed that he was not to join them, but they expected he would instead rather spend it with Feliciano.

“We only have three days left in the city, I suggest you try to enjoy it to the best you can,” was Aldrich's last suggestion before him and Roderich left, leaving Ludwig to now prepare his own wear as well as looking about and seeing what he could use as a weapon.

He remembered that all they had was taken from them when they had first entered the city. He just hoped Feliciano would bring something that could be just as good. He settled with some pole in the pile, probably to use for their cart if it got broken on the way. Ludwig was confident that nothing would happen to it. It was a strong one that had survived much longer trips than the one from his tribe to Rome, so his family wouldn't mind that he took it for sparring. As for his clothing, he went with something of his own, something that probably Feliciano was already tire of seeing. Well...he though. Feliciano always looked at him with the same fascination no matter what he wore.

As he placed his final medallions and bracelets, he smiled, not minding at all then. This was the nicest thing he had, and even if it wasn't the typical Roman thing, more barbaric as many tended to tell him, it was something more of his own, showing a part of him that he wanted Feliciano to know and he was proud of. Also, it worked well to hide anything that was best for guards not to see.

It was the late afternoon when Ludwig finally decided on leaving, the feast still strong, crowds filling every streets, even the ones of Ludwig's inn. Drinks, music, dances and all kinds of conversations were shared, all which Ludwig ignored as he hurriedly made his way past them.

Even the festival was not going to get in his way of giving the prince his usual visit, all the way to the palace, where the festival was still as strong, even commoners standing upon the steps, as proudly as if the palace was their own. He wasn't sure if he was to meet Feliciano outside, or head inside and find him. He searched for him through the many crowds, recognizing senators and even seeing Lovino happily talking to the chariot racer, Antonio. Feliciano must be here.

He felt a sudden hand on his shoulder, tight, familiar- he didn't even need to turn to know who it was. Feliciano smiled dearly up at him, decorated in new clothing that gave him much more finesse. He wore new silks of pure white, long and trimmed with gold, a new red treabea, and even a crown of colorful flowers on his head. He looked enchanting enough to kiss right that instant, but not with so many people around them. For now, they only greeted with their eyes, smiles and even nervous chuckles. It was almost like they were meeting for the first time and Ludwig wanted to die that instant from how embarrassing he was being. Feliciano did not mind, and quickly ushered them to what they had planned.

They headed down the streets, side by side, managing to stay together because of the space Feliciano's people left him whenever he came their way. Feliciano waved to them or even gave a slight bow, making so many people feel honored, blushing, tripping or dazed at the spot, wondering if they had really been seen and greeted by the prince or if it was just a hallucination caused by their drinks.

With all this attention on them, Ludwig didn't really see how they could escape unseen. This was just as bad as it had been the last few days they had been in the city. At this rate, they were sure to be seen, and the heaviness of grave punishments that would come to them was on Ludwig. He was close to telling Feliciano to forget about their training and to return to the festival, to enjoy their time as their families were hoping they were. But Feliciano continued on, quite confident, only his smile to hide whatever fear he had.

Soon, the crowds did disperse, less and less people the closer they got to their goal, then getting so desolated and empty that it had Ludwig wondering if there were even people in the city anymore. Feliciano had been right, they were off near the palace and temples, with the guards as well, leaving the more common places with no one to spot them.

They picked some torches that were in the area, and once they headed out through the usual hole in success, they lite them up, the forest path shown easily, dim, but clearly there as if it was still daylight. They had to be extra careful as they moved on with their torches, making sure that it didn't touch any of the leaves or branches on their way. It was hard, and because

of it they couldn't hold their hands as they wished, focused that they wouldn't accidentally burn down the entire forest.

That worry was gone once they reached the temple, same as it was, only more leaves covering the floors and ruins. They quickly dusted them off and placed the torches on ancient hooks in the walls, lighting greatly the spot they would train, which was right in the middle, a clear view for the statue to see them if it were alive. Ludwig then took out his pole and a small dagger from a hidden pocket in his cape, placing them on a marble block for Feliciano to see. The prince looked rather unimpressed at them, a smirk as he then moved the fabric of his tunic to reveal his legs, where a large sword had been tied to it the entire time. Proudly he placed it on the marble beside the pole Ludwig had brought, the pole seeming useless now.

Ludwig looked up to Feliciano, clearly impressed, his hands going over to the sword to study. It had a rich handle, decorated in gold and silver with symbols of the empire, surely something from the palace. Did it belong to Augustus? Perhaps Lovino? Surely no common soldier or even someone like Ludwig was allowed to touch it. Ludwig wondered if Feliciano had stolen it from his father. As he continued watching, moving and staring at the shine of the blade, Feliciano took out another smaller one hidden under his treachea. This one was much thinner, prestigious but far less decorations than the one Ludwig currently held. Feliciano admired it with a fondness similar to that of a loving father. He let his hands caress the entire blade and handle kindly, like it was a pet or even a lover.

"I would like to use this one for my training."

Ludwig nodded, it meant that he would use the other one, which he was glad to. "Excellent, but for now, I don't think starting with our weapons would be a good choice." He placed both of them on the block, then turning his gaze to Feliciano with stern determination, serious and commanding as any general was meant to be. "We'll start with stretches." It was decided and Feliciano truthfully wanted to groan and run the other direction...but he knew he needed this, so he stayed and became rather obedient to every exercise Ludwig gave him.

Ludwig could easily tell that Feliciano had never truly trained any of the sort. He did most of the stretches wrong and Ludwig had to constantly go over and correct his movements. A wrong move could cause strain. Sometimes he wondered if Feliciano was doing this on purpose just to have Ludwig touch him, caressing slowly each part of his skin, short but blissful, had Feliciano smile and smirking each time. It was a surprise that Ludwig hadn't already taken him in his arms to kiss against the bark of the single tree in the temple.

They were finally alone...and Ludwig only had three days left of his visit...but he continued with his training, seeing as Feliciano began to rightfully do the stretches and small laps around the temple.

They could now spar, each grabbing their own decided weapon and facing each other oppositely at a far off distance, just the space needed for both to move their swords all they wanted without hurting the other.

"Ready?" Ludwig called out.

Feliciano nodded, shaking, head down, gripping his own sword tighter. He was afraid and nervous.

“Calm down, no one is going to get hurt. Just follow my steps.”

Feliciano seemed calmer, head raising, loosening his body but the arm that still held the weapon. Ludwig began circling Feliciano, and Feliciano did the same, following his steps exactly, swords at their sides, swinging, waiting for their chance to be met in battle.

“That’s it. Now remember to be direct, focus all your strength, but also try to notice openings in your opponent. Once you see it, go forward, even if it fails. The point is to keep provoking them enough for them to show it.”

He understood, and after a couple of more seconds of pacing, very suddenly Feliciano lashed and went out to attack, but it was easily guarded by Ludwig.

“Excellent,” Ludwig complimented. But that was not the end of it.

They spared, slowly for Ludwig’s taste, but it was exactly the pace Feliciano needed to learn and to become rather successful. Maybe Ludwig was just saying that because it was Feliciano, but he was honestly doing a good job for someone who was doing this for the first time. Feliciano must have seen enough in front of him to be able to fight and even slash back at Ludwig with movements he hadn’t even told him about yet. More vigorous training like this and Feliciano would be as good as any soldier. But what he wanted for now, is for Feliciano to at least know the basics to defend himself, which he could see he had enough. Ludwig didn’t have to keep commanding, Feliciano began moving and attacking on his own. He wasn’t as fierce as Ludwig had learned to be in the training camp, but quite elegant, like he was just putting up a fight from a scene in the theater. They both grew distracted in the moment where it turned into a dance, a game, too dependent on their own trust as well as focused in the gleam of their swords under the dim lighting of the torches, shinning quite beautifully, enough for Feliciano to weaken and for Ludwig to lose control on the direction the blade was meant to go. It pierced skin, Feliciano gave a yell and then swords were dropped to the floor, of no importance now that one of them had been sliced enough to create a deep wound that had blood flowing.

“Quick, to the pond.” Holding to Feliciano’s arm, he dragged him forward, dumping his arm rather forcefully deep into the water, the hue turning red, Ludwig letting it flow until enough was gone to be bandaged.

Feliciano cringed and groaned, trying to hold himself from screaming by biting his own lips hard enough to redden.

“I am very, very sorry,” Ludwig apologized, ripping a fabric from his tunic, hoping it could suffice.

“It’s all right, we both got distracted,” he managed to say, now between tears in his eyes.

Ludwig carefully took Feliciano’s arm that still lay in the water, quickly wrapping the piece on to it, tightly. “Come on.” He tried to pull Feliciano up.

“Wha-what? Where?”

“We have to immediately go back to the palace so you can get this properly treated.” Ludwig was even taking their things, preparing to leave, and yet Feliciano stayed in his place.

“Please hurry, Feliciano.”

And Feliciano still not dared. “No,” he commanded, enough to halt anything Ludwig was trying to pick up.

“Feliciano it needs to be-”

“Let it as it is! I will not let a wound stop us from finally being alone together,” Feliciano practically shouted, trying to continue how commanding he could be, as expected from the son of an emperor, but by the end of his phrase he couldn’t hold back the choke from the tears that began to fall down his face.

Ludwig finally stopped, halted in his spot, his own heart breaking at the site. “Yo-your leaving in three days and I-I-” he couldn’t speak anymore with tears and sobs. Ludwig then came close, rubbing his arms to soothe him somehow. “-really wanted to spend it with you before you leave... be-because I don’t think we’ll meet again afterwards.” He continued now in Ludwig’s chest, the other wrapping his arms strongly around him, rocking him in slow motions. “I want to be with you like this. Always if it was possible. Please, let us use this night, let us be together as we wish these last three days.” He held to him tightly, and Ludwig did the same, dearly, his hands continuing to caress his back and arms.

He didn’t let go, wanting to prove to Feliciano that they would stay, that they would use their night, close to each other like this, enjoying these last moments, relishing them and more importantly for now, staying.

Ludwig placed his hands to his chin, raising his face to him to kiss, and how could Feliciano deny, already falling, wrapping his arms around him, deepening and letting it seal them together.

Truly then did Ludwig forget about everything else. About his family and the still continuing festival back in the city, about his promises to Augustus, about telling himself to bring Feliciano before daylight, it didn’t matter anymore when he had the other in his arms, finally alone, free to be and do with each other what so many seemed to want to stop.

Lips met neck, hands met hips and thighs, Feliciano did not mind at all how delicate Ludwig disrobed, making sure to not rip anything or even dirty, letting it fall to the ground carefully. Feliciano tried to do it the same way, but he was nervous, thus clumsy. Ludwig chuckled and helped, until they were both undone, still wrapped tightly around each other, afraid if they did let go if even just the slightest, they’d be dragged away or awakened by a dream.

It seemed like a dream to finally be like this, a beautiful one that would only disappoint and anger if awaken.

Surrounded by only hard ruins around them, Ludwig offered his cape as their bed. It wouldn't make much of a difference, but it could at last protect Feliciano from any more cuts and to get him as comfortable as he could.

As Ludwig laid him down, the hardness didn't matter to Feliciano, he happily made himself comfortable like he was at any of his rich beds at the palace. He had Ludwig on top of him, he had him kiss his body, wonderfully between his legs, his own hands on Ludwig's back, pushing him closer, his lips sucking and marking on his chest. So small, but enough for Feliciano to roll his head back in great pleasure, moans so delightful that it only pushed Ludwig to explore more of the new he couldn't or hadn't even been able to the last time they were in the temple before this night.

They continued with kisses, with heated touches and caresses, of small breaks to look into their eyes, a roll of Ludwig's hips to make them realize of their arousal, of their want for more. Upon realizing this, Ludwig stopped, raising himself up, the view under him exquisite, undeserving to himself he thought.

Surely this was a dream, someone like Feliciano wouldn't want him like this, wouldn't be awaiting him, wouldn't move his legs apart readily, or look up to him with expectations of more to come.

"I-I don't know I...what should I do?" He had never done something like this, and Feliciano expected as much, with his blush all across his body and how clumsy his last movements were.

Feliciano chuckled, placing his hands on either side of his face, dearly caressing and looking up to him. "It's all right, I haven't done something like this before either," he admitted, which only had Ludwig blushing more and growing the more nervous.

"I-I don't think I should be the one to-"

"No, please, I want it to be with you." He traced a finger on his lip, his other hand on his neck, hoping the touches will coax him to continue.

Ludwig had given up once again, leaning towards him and kissing his delicious lips, nodding and approving that yes, he would be the one to do this to him. Feliciano smiled widely, his hands making his way down his hips, to his waist, which he held and pulled closer to himself. Feliciano had his hands grope his rear, exciting Ludwig more, enjoying his groans and his redness increasing.

While he was distracted with this, Feliciano took his fingers into his mouth, wetting them enough to then have them reach below him. Ludwig had stopped and gazed at where those fingers were going, curious. He swore he was going to pop a blood vessel when he saw.

Those fine fingers reached his entrance below, diving in and creating the space Ludwig would then take with his erection. He saw the grimaces Feliciano took, strained, but then moaning, enough to get Ludwig to want to finish that very moment. Feliciano kept adding more fingers, until four were doing the duty that he wished to do, hands on his own member, rubbing, joining along with the moans Feliciano filled the old temple with.

The surroundings gave it this ritualistic feeling, like Ludwig was seeing a god prepare himself only for him, with skin shinning like fire to every gaze Ludwig gave him, sweat coiling down, like it was mocking him for the skin it could thread that Ludwig was not doing himself.

With Feliciano's fingers out, he prepared his position to have Ludwig, his own hands coming to grab on the organ, leading it to the depths it was to take. Yet Ludwig remained there, still afraid, still not sure if he could really pleasure Feliciano as they both so many times dreamed about. The prince, seeing the doubt, extended his arms once again around him, with such kindness in his eyes that made everything about this beautiful.

"Do not worry." He kissed the tip of his nose, and then his lips. "I really want to be with you like this."

It was the words Ludwig needed to relax, to settle himself more in the embrace of his body.

"Ease in slowly," was the only advice he gave before Ludwig obeyed and began to press in.

Even at just the tip, a course of heat went through the both of them, igniting in such a way that already they shouted, already gripping to each other tight, savoring only the beginning. Every time it seemed Feliciano relaxed, Ludwig would continue to deepen, that fire in their bodies blazing the more, only easing once Ludwig knew he was fully sheathed in him and had to stop to take in how greatly he felt around him, with warmth like the very embraces they had shared so many times. They breathed heavily, Ludwig's face resting on his shoulder as he tried to get used to it, which he couldn't with how euphoric it felt. His body never ceased the feeling and Feliciano was feeling the same, hands still on his back, as a way to hold himself from crying any louder and making the other think he was hurt. He was not, sure it stung a bit, but it didn't matter when Ludwig was the one with him like this, still in his arms, looking now into their eyes so lovingly, their breaths mingling together as they tried to omit words to describe this.

"Fe-Feliciano..." was what Ludwig managed, taken still by the bliss in the other's face.

"Lu-ludwig, oh Ludwig." He pulled him tight to him, moving his own hips, feeling the rod, his head rolling again, showing his graceful neck, which Ludwig wasted no time in taking into his mouth. "More," Feliciano called out, with another roll of his hips to which Ludwig answered, out then thrusting back in to the warmth.

With this he began his movements into him, each time trying to take more, as if it could truly make them stick like this forever. Any other sound in the forest was blocked by their own sounds, their moans, their shouts, their calling of each other's name, and Feliciano's commands to go harder, deeper or sometimes even slower, so they could focus on the wrap of their arms, in the light of their eyes or the way their hair fell and stuck to their skin in sweat.

"I love you, I love you," Feliciano chanted, which only drove Ludwig's movements quicker, Feliciano's legs tightening around him as Ludwig raised his hips slightly to let his member take more, to savagely claim him, only for himself, always and forever, and any other would have to fear his strength and anger if they told him otherwise.

“I love you, I love you, I love you,” Ludwig chanted back, feeling as his internal fires blazed to its limit, ready to expose itself into Feliciano’s own fire.

He pounded harder, wanting Feliciano to have it, wanting to have the prince experience his own. Feliciano’s screams increased, and to Ludwig they were like the most beautiful of melodies and he really wished he could continue to ravage him if only he could continue to vocalize like he did. But he couldn’t hold it any longer, and Feliciano was the same.

A couple of last powerful thrusts into him, some last arches and cries from Feliciano, and everything combusted into white.

The last shouts they gave had birds in the trees flying out, like the horn for a new coming war was sounded.

Defeated they lay, exhausted on the cape, breathing, everything they had given to that experience. Even as they were done, Ludwig still craved for his skin and thus still kissed his neck, his cheek and then his lips, which Feliciano returned as eagerly, finding enough energy to make it heated as if they could go for another. But really neither couldn’t, it was all gone and what they had they still used to caress, to feel or just stare at the other in the post state of what they had done. To both of them, they still looked as magnificent, as beautiful, even in the mess of sweat and other body fluids.

“Amazing,” Feliciano complimented as he rested down, wrapping his arms around Ludwig’s neck and pulling him to rest on him.

There was no other place Ludwig wanted to rest on and thus accepted, hands wrapped tightly under him, settling with the quickened pace of his heart.

“Was it really?” He asked, even after the act, still as worried.

Feliciano gave him the proudest smile, hands on his hair, which he rubbed and pushed from his face. “Like a god had come and made love to me.” And Ludwig wanted to faint.

He was left with nothing to say for he didn’t know what bigger compliment he could give to Feliciano than what he gave to him. He settled with giving him a bright smile, the type that Feliciano loved to see on him, which was more than enough to make him feel elated.

Ludwig took his hand to kiss, passing the wound still wrapped in its fabric, over his arm, shoulder, neck, jaw, and finally lips. It was a path that had excited Feliciano and it was then that he noticed that Ludwig still remained inside him. He didn’t bother telling Ludwig to get out, and Ludwig didn’t mind either, now kissing passionately, close together and still wanting to use more of the night they still had.

The torches still danced on and just like that fire, theirs continued, alone, only the statue of Venus to witness them, blessing in the rest of their love making.

This is the first time I write a scene like that and post it. I'm pretty nervous on how people will react to it, surely there are many things I did wrong. But I hope it was enough at least, hopefully I'll learn by the next time I write a scene like this. When? I have no idea, we'll see.

Also, Wildest Dreams by Taylor Swift really reminds me of this story.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Another quick update! I'll start on the next chapter soon, but since school is going to start for me again pretty soon, I don't know if it will be that quick. But let's hope! Enjoy this chapter!

A new morning glow shone through the tree. The shadow was enough to not disturb the two lovers who still slept on, naked on each other's arm, only their hassled clothing to work for them as a blanket. Ludwig had awakened first, and despite seeing this new shining sun, didn't bother to move the slightest, not when Feliciano lay beautifully next to him. His face was in a serene state of ultimate peace, smiling even, those lips reddened by their use, inviting still. His eyelashes were long, shining in place of the eyes that were still shut, hair tousled but waved in perfection, all still on Ludwig's arm, freshly taken by himself.

The promise he had made about bringing him back before sunlight didn't mean anything anymore, not with how precious he looked, skin glowing in the same shade of the peeking sun. His hands smoothed over his shoulder, his hair, not minding just staring at him, too tired to do any more.

They had spent much of their night awake, with each other in kisses, in embraces, in delightful moans and thrusts, all until both fell succumbed and decided to finally rest. After a while, Ludwig wondered if he should go back to sleep as the other, but Feliciano's eyes finally fluttered open, smile growing larger once seeing the other still beside him, hands on each other and Feliciano himself wrapped on top. He raised himself up to place a quick morning kiss on his lips, which then spread the smile over to the Germanic's own mouth. He had him lay to the ground once again, kissing him feverishly, hands on his hips, stomach and chest. Feliciano fell easily, his own hands wrapped around him, pulling him for more, both smiling all throughout.

They stopped, brushing hair from their faces, looking at each other with such admiration, love and endearment.

"Di-did you really mean what you said last night?" Feliciano asked gently, almost a whisper, even if they were alone, even after the shouts and screams they gave the passing night.

"I said many things last night." And they both laughed.

But Feliciano suddenly stopped, serious yet still as enchanting. "When you said you loved me." He placed a finger on Ludwig's lips, as if it could get him to say the words yet again.

Then Ludwig got serious...too serious, it had Feliciano wondering if he felt disgusted or insulted by such feelings.

"I did." And even in that seriousness, he managed to show a loving gaze, taking Feliciano's hand and letting it caress his face. "I love you, Feliciano."

"And I love you, Ludwig." And they kissed, resting on the cape yet again to continue, ignoring the time, and the city continuing to be forgotten behind them.

"You...fell?" Augustus questioned.

Feliciano nodded eagerly.

"I apologize for letting such a thing happen, your majesty." Ludwig was at Feliciano's side, ready to bow if he had to.

They were in the throne room, in front of the emperor, being questioned as to where they have been the entire night and early morning, and the deep cut Feliciano got in his arm.

"I don't...understand-"

"I wanted to see the weapons our smiths made. I begged Ludwig to take me and he was only complying. I started playing around with some and tripped. Many fell, one ended up cutting me." He showed his wrapped arm as proof. "We stayed for a long time getting things as they were, plus the smith invited us for drinks in his home, and we stayed."

Augustus still looked on skeptically, eyeing them intensely, hoping to get out the truth. Seeing as they both remained still, awaiting his next response, it seemed that this was indeed what had happened. He sighed, rubbing his fingers on his temple in stress.

Feliciano had simply been with a smith, after he was panicking with great worry all the morning as he did not find him in the palace.

"Ludwig!" He pointed a rather menacing hand at him. "There was indeed a festival and I was sure you both would have wanted to enjoy from it. You have been faithful returning Feliciano at the right time since you've gotten here and have done well protecting him. I will forgive you for last night, but do not let this happen again!"

"Yes, your majesty." And he bowed, to show his commitment, as obedient as he had learned to be with him.

But in the moment...it passed through his mind how in truth, he wasn't. He had taken Feliciano out of the city, had fallen for him, had defiled him when he was engaged and was now even lying. Augustus captured that moment of doubt in his eyes, even in his posture and could easily tell that something was wrong, but he didn't question any further. He dismissed Ludwig and he made his way out of the room, wanting to face his own family so they knew he was all right and to help them with any preparations for their departure soon. Feliciano chased to follow him.

“Feliciano! You spent enough time out. I’ll give you the chance to spend one last day with him tomorrow, but for today, stay here.”

He stopped halfway, shyly playing with his hand, disappointed, but nevertheless loyal to his father’s words.

“Can I still wish him a farewell for the day?” He asked, hopeful, his gaze from his grandfather moving to the halls Ludwig just left through.

There was this intensity in his still gaze through the empty space, too loyal and even...loving. It flashed the emperor with memories of his own Helena, of gazes that they shared just like the one their own son held currently.

“You may.”

And Feliciano rushed off, the emperor caught in the kindness of thoughts of his own lover.

Feliciano reached Ludwig just as he was about to head out, his rushing steps enough to halt Ludwig from continuing onward. He wanted to place his hands on his shoulder, look to him with all his affection, take a kiss and an embrace, but with guards in the area and Augustus anytime coming to check on them, he settled with a single hand on his arm.

“Will we go to the temple one last time?” Could they? Surely with the feast done, the guards would return to their normal scouting and their escape would be free of them. Tomorrow would be Ludwig's last full day in Rome, his last day with Feliciano, and he would gladly spend it in his arms, alone to speak and to kiss and touch.

He nodded to him, wanting to ease close with a kiss of promise. But just that moment, Augustus had turned a corner to see them, and he knew he couldn’t, despite how inviting Feliciano’s lips were right there.

“Tomorrow,” he only said, heading down the steps, leaving Feliciano behind with a shining smile.

The next morning, Augustus had settled by a view to the front, which showcased the city spectacularly, plus a clear view to the frontal palace steps, where he noticed Ludwig arriving for the day, awaiting outside for his son. Not long after, Feliciano hurried down, wearing one of his heavier togas, covering all of him.

Why so much clothing for such hot day to stroll the city?

He saw them leave close by each other’s side, deeper into the city until the buildings covered them well and they were lost to his eyes. Yet he continued gazing on, in hopes of managing to capture them, enjoying from the city...as he hoped.

“Paulus!” He called.

A guard came quickly to his side, bowing and ready to fulfill anything his emperor asked.

“I want you to follow my son and Ludwig for the entire day. Tell me what they’ve been doing in their strolls once you return. Try that they don’t notice you.”

Augustus didn’t even turn his gaze from the view, knowing that the guard bowed and headed off instantly. He saw him soon enough making his way down the palace steps, hurriedly heading the direction into the city to catch them before they went any deeper. With the guard now lost between the buildings as well, Augustus finally turned back to the palace on other businesses.

He hoped that when the guard returned, he just held news of their passing in Rome...nothing else.

The guard mended himself with the crowd, as he had changed into a normal toga, with only a sword at his waist. He easily found them, as the two stood out enough, mixed themselves in the crowd, closely together, chatting and continuing onward. The guard made sure to keep a distance as to be able to see them, but behind enough to not be noticed. He saw them as they hurriedly passed the markets and over to the commoner areas. He questions as to why they would go there. There is nothing that would interest a prince and a Germanic traveler. Yet he followed them, hiding between walls, trees, fabrics, and even tall pottery. The prince and the traveler stopped by a wall, looking about them, noticing no one, not even the guard watching them behind the collection of pottery. He sees as they then take a left into a tight alley, he comes close enough to see them head out through a small hole in the very gates of the city. He stands surprised, for they just headed out, no regret, with all the perseverance and confidence. He should try to find help, he should go to the emperor immediately, but he was told to follow them for the rest of the day, and willing to see what exactly they did outside the city walls, he himself decides to pass through.

He waits until Ludwig and Feliciano have gone deep enough into the woods, to then follow behind, continuing to hide between trees and bushes. At one point though, he lost them, with no trace or even a clear floor to give him hints as to what direction they took. He wasted dear time searching, looking for footprints or broken branches that would make an open way through the forest. Nothing, he was starting to fear that he was lost.

The afternoon continued and still no sign of his targets. He thought of simply returning back to the city, which he had a clear view of and could easily follow back. He worried over what he was to tell the emperor, afraid that he would lash on him for letting them get lost in the woods.

A sudden scream broke him from his thoughts, echoes continuing as he looked around him, for what it could be and where it had come from, finding only emptiness as the echo died down. Worried over the prince, he went on its direction, preparing his sword for if he had to attack something. As he came deeper into the woods, he heard the distant sound of moans. He feared the worst and dashed in the direction they came from, the sounds becoming louder the quicker he went towards it, his sword unsheathed, blade shining and ready to protect the prince as he was taught to do. But the closer he came, the sounds becoming much clearer, it didn’t start to sound like it was of pain or fear. Well...they were like- but it couldn’t be, surely some other couple who had come into the woods to seek such activities. The prince

wouldn't dare do such things with a lowly barbarian. Yet he continued towards it curiously, his pace slowing, steps being careful as not to cause any sounds that could disturb.

“Oh! Oh! OH! OH!”

He was startled at how close, clear, and similar to the prince it sounded, picking it up from behind a veil of long leaves.

The couple must be there.

As to not disturb, peeking out of curiosity and proving to himself that it wasn't the prince, he moved the leaves only slightly, just enough to see what was happening without being seen himself.

It was a scene of betrayal, of hideous lust and perversion.

To the worse of his thoughts, the prince was laying on what seemed like a blanket of their own clothing, his head rolled back, beautiful mouth agape as it continued to fill the woods with his moans. The Germanic was between his lean legs, plowing in to him with great precision, causing the prince to arch, wrapping his arms around him in a plead for more. Part of him wanted to think that he was being attacked by the Germanic and thus had been awaiting for him to save him. But with the pleased smiles, the way he held on to the other, their gazes and the way they kissed, it proved otherwise.

He was never noticed, for they continued on, lost in their passions and the heavenly feel of each other's body. The guard didn't understand why he still remained in the spot, looking even horrified, hoping that maybe this was some bad dream or just a hallucination the gods cursed him with. But it didn't matter to them if it was something of ill will to the guard, to them it was of beauty, of promise and the biggest of feelings.

The guard saw as they came undone, last shouts and stretches before they settled, laying peacefully in each other's body as their breaths relaxed. Even if it was meant as a whisper, the guard could still hear clearly the “I love you” the Germanic had given to the prince as he kissed and suck on his neck and chest. Feliciano smiled blissfully, his eyes lighting up as if he was coming alive from a deep sleep. Although this time he couldn't hear him, he could tell that he was whispering endearments with the same meaning into his ear, having the Germanic blush and smile in a way that the guard had never seem him done from all the times he had seen him in the palace.

And soon they were off in another round, the prince's noises much louder and free, the Germanic growling and even intensifying his thrust more than the last one. The guard was rather surprised at their energy, then worrying over how long he would stay there watching. At one point it didn't quicken as he expected, it slowed, and they only gazed at each other, waiting for words, relaxing as the prince placed his hands on either side of the Germanic's face.

“I would run away with you,” he said with such dedication that the guard feared they would do it that instant.

The Germanic began to slow his thrust until he had stopped all completely, gazing back with a smile just as beautiful as the prince's. He caressed his bangs out of his face, to see better his glowing eyes, his enchanting smile, being reminded of what he could have with him always...if they did such a thing.

Yes, run away, to live their lives for themselves, to be together and continue down any roads that would fulfill their dreams and grant them with new adventures.

"I would too," he admitted, leaning down to kiss him, his pace once again continuing, filling their mouths with their grunts and breaths.

"Th-then aaaahh, tonight! Tonight!" He shouted with each thrust.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" Ludwig shouted back, quickening his thrusts for another finish.

The guard, having heard their words, quickly stood up and headed his way back into the city.

He had to warn the emperor before the prince took off with the barbarian.

Back at the palace, the emperor was conversing with a group of senators, scrolls with them, counting and thinking on their next course for a battle further into the empire. It was suggested that nobody came to disturb them in such crucial planning, but Paulus knew that what he had was dire information that needed to be told that instant. He seemed tired, exhausted, sweating and fighting for every breath he took. He had just ran from the old temple to the Roman palace as fast as he could and non-stop. It was a surprise he hadn't fainted half way.

Other guards who stood at the entrance of the room tried to stop him from coming in so abruptly, but the guard didn't care, crashing in, disturbing the rather low conversation with his loud takes of breaths. It was a relief to have finally arrived at the presence of the emperor.

"Paulus?" Augustus questioned, moving his gaze away from the current scroll he was holding.

The guard rushed over, ignoring the gazes the senators gave him, wanting to pass the message to the emperor.

He came close, whispering everything he needed to know to his ear without the others overhearing. The Emperor's eyes widened with each word. He grew angry, vicious, fearful, it even got the senators to move back afraid.

Once Paulus was done, he eased away, afraid that punishment could befall on him for not having stopped them when he was there or just because he was the one to come with the news.

Long silence continued as they all starred at the emperor, expecting commands or any sort of explosion that would show his anger.

He erupted by throwing a scroll hard to the floor, echoing across the room and down the halls, startling anyone who was near.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I really haven't been feeling so good the last few days and even now it goes up and down. Just a couple of days ago I blew up and cried a lot in a car ride with my parents by all these things bothering me and they did really well to help me feel better, but I still need a lot of calming. Because of this it took me a bit to post, not to mention a new semester started for me so there's also that weight. My next update will take a while because I won't know how I'll feel later on and I might have more college work. But never the less, I will continue. Working on this helps to make me feel so much better. I Hope you enjoy!

They couldn't do it.

Although leaving to who knows where to be with each other did sound tempting, they couldn't betray their families like that. They were being counted on for too many things.

They had responsibilities, obligations, not to mention that they would have the armies of the empire searching for them no matter where they would go.

What kind of life would that be for your beloved? Always having to run away and not have the moment of peace you hoped with that rash decision.

As they changed, the sun setting about to end their day, they came to the decision that this would be their last day as it was decided by whatever faiths intertwined their lives. Knowing such, a heavy melancholy fell between them, silence as they took their sweet time putting the last of their garments, hoping it could extend their stay, hoping it could make them forget about having to return.

They spoke again when Feliciano apologized for suggesting, and Ludwig apologized for having accepted at first to later deny him. They promised themselves to not shed a single tear and thus, after a long final kiss and embrace, they came back together to the city.

Like any other day, just as the night had arrived above them, Ludwig accompanied Feliciano to the top of the palace steps. Feliciano was expecting to enter with him, but with Ludwig letting go of his hand, he knew it was time for what he had dreaded the whole walk back.

They stood for a long time, wishing they could do more than just stare at each other, searching for the right words or actions for their farewell.

Feliciano didn't care for who could see or notice, he got close, placing his hands on his shoulder, gazing in the loving way that they only tried to show in the temple.

“I...don’t want to-” and tears already gathered, Ludwig calming him with hushes and caressing hands at his face, his fingers trying to catch any tear that would run down his beautiful face.

“We promised to be strong, please don’t do this.” Ludwig eased close, inches to kiss him, like Feliciano, not caring about who could see. “The last image I want of your face is your smile. So please, for me, smile.”

Feliciano had hated being told this so much growing up, but this time, it was Ludwig who was asking, and for Ludwig, he would smile through the underworld. He laughed, that joyous sound and the big grin enough to make his tears disappear. Ludwig didn’t know how he would continue to go on without that smile. He pulled him into an embrace, loving and tight, hands caressing his back and arms as if to cage him there, with him in his arms for the rest of the night. It soothed Feliciano into complete calmness, resting into his chest, wanting to make that warmth last in his memory.

“I’ll love you forever,” Feliciano whispered, wanting to settle even deeper.

Ludwig raised his head to kiss his forehead, gently, long, holding himself down from taking his lips, which were already offered, Feliciano tip toeing up, expecting it. He couldn’t hold it, and he placed a rather quick kiss, beginning to ease off, afraid that someone had seen.

“Forever,” were Ludwig’s last words.

He slowly, aching, moved apart, taking his last steps down the palace and towards his inn, where he would have his last rest in Rome. And even after Ludwig had disappeared between the buildings, Feliciano still stood in the same place, as if he was expecting his quick return, hoping that maybe Ludwig would come back with news that he would stay, that he would remain for another month, or that this was all dream, and the next morning he would be awoken to enjoy more weeks of Ludwig’s company. But time passed and he was still met with the empty space of the palace, a guard coming to tell him that he should head inside and rest. Reluctantly he did, many times looking back, still hoping.

Everything had been packed and ready, the cart was already settled outside, Roderich had gone to pick up their horses, Aldrich was off wishing his final farewells and getting some last minute items. Ludwig still remained by the inn, watching over their things outside, sitting with a downcast as he kept his gaze solid on the floor.

The day had arrived, he was going to leave, and now he will only depend on memories.

Roderich arrived with their two horses, Aldrich with bags of food and some extra coins he made by selling some things of worth they possessed.

The horses tied to the carriage, the road open for them to take, they began to settle on one last stroll through the city.

Ludwig was going to miss this vastness of people, like he would miss the vastness amount of skin he could thread on Feliciano's skin. He would miss the tall buildings, always on either side of him like they were ready to engulf him...like he would miss the tall trees of the temple, through which the sun shone to illuminate Feliciano's skin, hair and eyes like bronze and gold. He would miss their paintings, sculptures and pictures, like he would miss Feliciano's own, his songs, his knowledge of the city and of the many stories of gods they told each other. He will miss Feliciano's laughter, as lively as the events of the city. He would miss his chatter, with so many amazing things to talk about which he could manage to find no end to and Ludwig will always listen with the same wonderment.

Feliciano...he would miss him so dearly, and it was all that he thought about as they continued, somehow the city not as spectacular as the new feeling he got whenever he spent his time with the prince. He maintained his gaze as distant, only holding to his horse's reigns and letting it guide him out.

Soon enough they reached the gates, their exit and the long rode to take back before them, with no return and the city to be left behind them. Ludwig felt so tempted to turn his horse and run back, stay here and remain lost to his family.

No, no, he wouldn't do something like this to his father, to his people back in his tribe. He would leave, keep the great memory of the city and of his love to Feliciano for himself, hold it dear to him, forever as he promised. But as they reached the gates, a line of guards assembled just as they were to pass, like a wall meant to obstruct their path. Aldrich stopped their horses and waited, thinking that maybe they just wanted to inspect their things, but not even for that they moved.

"Men, is there a problem?" He asked.

They refused to speak to him, their eyes only on his son, who began to get rather fearful of those intent and blaming looks at him.

"He's under arrest," one of them called, two others heading towards Ludwig, intending to get him down his horse.

Ludwig fearfully moved back, giving them the same treatment of cold glares so they wouldn't dare come any closer.

"What kind of charges? My son has not done any of the sorts to receive a sentence," Aldrich defended, even moving his horse to protect him from any other who came closer.

"We are only fulfilling orders! We were insisted on the capture of this specific man and for him to be given judgment right upon the emperor!"

"For what?" Ludwig called out, not prepared for the men that suddenly took him from the back, harshly moving him down from the horse, keeping a tight hold on his wrists tied to his back.

"Betrayal to the emperor and attacks on the prince."

Tied, pushed and kicked was how they dragged Ludwig and the rest of his family to the palace.

"I did no such thing!" Ludwig kept shouting to them, his words ignored.

His yelling and fighting continued until they reached the throne room with the emperor, where Augustus had been waiting for him, a couple of his men to the side that he would need so proper judgment could pass.

"Augustus, what is the meaning of this?" Aldrich called out, having joined Ludwig the rest of the way and trying to get the guards to understand that this was perhaps a misunderstanding.

"Punishment, Aldrich," the emperor addressed his friend coldly, with a menace that made him undistinguishable.

"For what?" Aldrich had asked several times already.

Before Augustus could continue, a meek little "Father?" grabbed the attention of all who were there.

They turned and spotted the two princes enter the room with slow and uneasy steps. Any other time and Ludwig would have been ecstatic to see Feliciano again after he had thought that the last night would have been the final one, same with Feliciano, but not in these circumstances that neither understood.

"What is going on?" He asked, his own brother just as curious, gazing between the crowds of guards, the Germanics and his father.

"Appropriate timing, my son, no better time for you and Ludwig to confess."

Feliciano was beginning to worry, still in his spot, his body shaking as he awaited the words along with the rest that were present. Augustus then gazed strongly at Ludwig, a fierce one that seemed to have ignited with the most powerful of fires and had Ludwig quivering in the hold of the guards.

"I placed a great amount of trust in you, Ludwig, giving you the chance to spend time with my son as he had wished. I was at peace knowing that I could confide in you, after all, you are the son of a dear friend of mine, with a respectful role as a prince yourself. I expected you to be loyal as I know your kind are taught to be and I was confident that you wouldn't lay a finger on Feliciano. But I was wrong in my judgment, and I should have suspected from the moment you two met."

Ludwig and Feliciano were both achingly afraid of what he could mean, Feliciano close to letting his knees fall apart to the floor from his constant shaking and yet Ludwig remained strong, his own glare competing with the flames of the emperor, seeming to shield from whatever spark that could blow in his direction.

"I don't know what you're talking about. I did nothing to hurt Feliciano."

“Don’t act as if I don’t know what you were doing in the old temple in the woods.”

With the look of fear in Ludwig's eyes and the way his escaping movements halted, Augustus knew he had once again triumphed over an opponent. Feliciano was in the same state, holding dearly to his brother, afraid that he would drop down and weep loudly for everyone to hear. Lovino, along with the rest in the room, did not understand what the emperor meant with an old temple in the woods, but with Ludwig not fighting back and how agitated Feliciano had turned, it meant that whatever secret they held had been revealed, and it had been horrible enough for Ludwig to be arrested. Lovino comforted his brother as best as he could, not standing to see him in such a way, like he could break down, fall to the floor and remain there in great sorrow.

“You let the imperial prince out of the city, exposed to danger, resulting to cuts and bruises. You couldn’t control your desires and you forced yourself upon him, taking a purity that was meant to be for his wife. You both even planned to run away, with nothing, not a word, or a letter. I could convict you of kidnapping if I wished,” Augustus barked and shouted into the spaces of the throne room, his word echoing and everyone laying still as they heard, shocked, silent and even fearful, for the emperor still raged on with his intense fire ready to burn even fiercer. “My boy was meant to stay here in the city, he was to remain innocent, pure. Now he’s damaged, you have ruined him and thus you have ruined me, and you’re the one who forcefully did it to him.”

“He didn’t force himself upon me, he had my consent and I had desired for it,” Feliciano finally called out, not standing to let his father continue to shout on, putting Ludwig like a horrible thief to the eyes and ears of everyone there. Lovino had tried to stop him, hoping to shush him or let his father continue, but Feliciano couldn’t bear it, letting go from Lovino’s tight grasp and even coming closer to his father, ready to challenge his order.

“Ludwig was nothing but kind, he was loyal, he was protective, careful and he gave me great company in his long month stay. I grew to yearn for him far more than I should for a friend and I craved everything he did to me.”

The room continued to stare on perplexed, unsure of who to rightfully take their word, but they knew they couldn’t obey any others but the emperor.

Augustus was startled at how protective Feliciano stood, wanting to stoop him down with his words if he could, but the emperor knew he could be stronger and thus he continued to stare on with the anger he hadn’t quenched ever since he found out what was going on between the Germanic and his son. Not even to his own son did he show signs of calming or falling into compliance of whatever he had to say.

“That does not excuse to have been giving the chance to touch you. If he knew of the consequences then he wouldn’t have acted upon them. He must have known that he could have ruined you.”

“Ruined me? He made me feel perfect and complete, unlike you and brother had ever done,” he shouted back with a strength that had surprised both the emperor and his brother.

Feliciano wore an expression that was so rare for Augustus to see, like he wasn't seeing his son or his wife, but himself.

"Enough!" He shouted even louder, enough to get the prince back to his trembling, to move, all the defensiveness he had grown torn down by the even more powerful tone in his father's voice. "Whether you accepted or not, you do not have a say in this. I am your father and as so you are under my orders until I perish from the Earth. Ludwig disobeyed me and committed crimes to us by tainting you, as so he would be punished as he is deserved." He turned away from his son to the prisoner, ready to inflict a trial.

Feliciano once again tried to stop him, but Lovino had inched closer and held him. "Don't make this any worst!" He told his younger brother rather menacingly, working to still him for now, even if the great worry and fear in his eyes, still begging to come close to Ludwig, to try and save him from his father's wrath.

Augustus began analyzing and thinking a good enough sentence. Feliciano, who knew of the many types of trials one could go through in Rome, worried over which horrible ones were passing through his father's mind.

He tried to move away from Lovino's grasp. "Father, please, let him be!" He begged, a pain in his voice that had many others hurting as they saw. "Just let him go! Please don't kill him! Please, please, please, please." He now wept, Lovino having to hold tighter to him, watching as Feliciano's face reddened with tears and continuous cries of mercy.

Augustus moved on closer without a care to his son's weeping. He had made up his mind and he was to tell Ludwig and his family, who awaited, scared and agitated, somehow still hopeful that there was a way to stop this.

"Ludwig, you will fight against my strongest men in a gladiator match. They will deal with you for as long as you can stand and death will await you then."

It was decided, most of the men used to Augustus giving such sentences, but Feliciano continued to fill that silence with his sobs, now rested on his brother's chest as he caressed his back in hopes to ease him...which he knew would not be enough.

"This will be in two days' time. Until then you will be held in one of our cellars." Augustus had turned away, ready to leave the guards to deal with preparations.

"Augustus! You cannot let this happen!" Aldrich still fought on, even moving towards Augustus in hopes of convincing him. Guards held him from continuing any forward, but Augustus had heard him enough to turn back.

"I will. Your son committed a crime and he will be dealt with accordingly."

"For falling in love! This is an outrage!" Aldrich talked back, refusing to be held, wanting to really grab the emperor if he could, not caring of the punishment he could get himself if he did.

Augustus remained rather silent as he only stared on, hating the words Aldrich used to point out their feelings.

“Your son disobeyed me and I will not stand for such disrespect. The game is for others to see that you do not mess with me or with my family and the plans established for them.”

“Those are sick and you are impeding happiness to your children for your own selfish plans.” Augustus hadn’t struck him yet because of their past as friends, but he extended his hand and gripped the front of his tunic enough.

“I’m only doing what’s best for my sons,” he growled, breathing into Aldrich’s face with how close he had gotten, his eyes bared like swords stabbing into the other.

“Please.” Although Aldrich had eased if only slightly, he still hoped on, he still tried what he could to save his son. “We’ll leave immediately. We won’t return and your son wouldn’t see him again. Please, don’t let this happen to him.”

And Augustus actually thought of that, but who is to say that they both wouldn’t sneak, who is to say that they wouldn’t run away the instant they found. They managed to hide themselves and make love without his knowing until it was too late. What else could they plot? What could they do knowing that both were alive? He could see that indeed they loved each other, strong enough to be able to come across anything and ruin both for themselves lives of stature, pride and power. He couldn’t let that happen and if it meant ridding Ludwig, so be it.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered lastly to now his dear old friend, moving away, not caring about how unjust he was being, about his son’s tears or how he had sent a rather strong and young man to his death.

It would be worth it later on, his sons will one day understand.

The guards began to move Ludwig up, forcing him down the halls on to the cellars, Ludwig still fighting on, especially now knowing that his sentence was death. The heavy amount of guards was enough to control him, but it wasn’t enough to let Ludwig loose the sight of his lover suffering, tears falling down his face, wishing desperately to come closer and soothe them.

“Feliciano!” He managed to call out, not mad, not betrayed, but only worried, wishing he could tell him to calm, to smile as they had taught themselves to do for their last moments.

“Ludwig…” Feliciano called back, ready to run off towards him, hand extended as if could reach him easily, but Lovino kept holding him down, still in his place, watching as the guards along with Ludwig disappeared between the halls, leaving the two princes alone.

“I cannot believe you.” Lovino paced the room, right behind Feliciano, who sat gazing to the sun set, Lovino hoping that the glow would help him to relax. Feliciano remained surprisingly still, like a statue staring longingly as his brother continued to scold him. “I

thought I warned you enough. I told you it was a silly infatuation, definitely not worth all this mess.” And Feliciano refused to say anything still, gripping his hands together, a sort of leverage to not fall into tears once again. Lovino kept on pacing, hoping his resounding steps could get him to say something.

“You shouldn’t have let yourself-”

“But I did, I did.” And whatever calm he had reached was gone, breached by his sadness once again, of fault and of guilt. “I love him so much Lovino, I couldn’t hold it, I wanted him so much that I risked his life and now I don’t think I can live knowing I caused him this, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t.” Defeated into his own arms he cried, horrible weeping that Lovino feared it would block even his breathing, for he took in too many breaths, still trying to hold to something to calm. Lovino didn’t know how he could deal with this, but ease close and sit beside him, offering his hand to rub his back, which did nothing, for he still continued to cry on.

“Just get over this, better things await you then mourning over him.”

And Feliciano stopped all completely, eyes widened, maddened at how Lovino just expected him to push Ludwig away from his life so easily. For a moment, Lovino though it had worked.

“Just, forget him, like all we did meant nothing to me.” And he was light up with fury, though his eyes continued to show his sadness, with tears still gathering in them. “How would you feel if I told you to just get over Antonio, huh?” He practically shouted at him as he stood, beginning the pace Lovino had forgotten as he was washed by the feelings of his own lover.

“Don’t drag him into this, he has nothing to do with it. Besides, I know I’ll have to someday. I at least have it clear we cannot be together.”

“Then why can’t you fight. Father obviously listens to you more than me. Why can’t you make him understand?”

“Father doesn’t understand through mere feelings, he only wants wealth and opportunities for us, which is something that Antonio cannot provide for me, and he never will.” And Lovino lay with defeat, a sorrow creeping to him at this realization that he constantly had to face ever since he had fallen for the racer.

“Wealth and riches is all he thinks about for us. It would only serve him in the end. I don’t care about these things, Lovino. I care about Ludwig, I care about anything I can learn about the world. I would leave behind the palace and everything I owned if it meant I could go out and see it however I wished.” He looked out through the window, as if hoping that freedom could take him right that instant. “If I could have him, if we could both be free, if I could see him now.” He once again saddened, kneeling to the floor, trying so hard to maintain himself, but the tears continued, enough wanting to even wet the floor.

“I care about Antonio,” Lovino declared, quite suddenly in the agitated silence that settled. It was there that he realized his father’s harshness, his own towards his little brother, the unjust sentence Ludwig was given and even understood what Feliciano was going through, for he

felt he was going through something similar with Antonio. He stood then, wanting to help his brother somehow, if even this little thing.

“I can’t stop father from going through with the sentence, but...do you wish to see him?”

That had perked Feliciano's interest, turning to his brother with dried tears, the cascade stopping knowing that such a suggestion was there, that he could truly see him before this happened.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

I've gotten better since the last update I made. Sure it still goes up and down, but now it's not as bad as it was, where I ended up crying a lot, barely eating and just feeling really down. Just more calming and I will get back normal, but I've made progress and dealt. But look, I posted just before Valentine's day, woo! I don't know if I'll have my next update soon, with college and work, but I always find time, no worries. I hope you enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The cellars in the palace were strictly for people who dared cause any crimes against the ruling family. This was the place Lovino knew Ludwig was taken and probably the only one down there since there hadn't really been any other occurrences against them. Because of its recent new admittance, guards were placed to pace all the halls, as if they were holding a greater menace than just a single barbarian. Lovino, who had once learned their positions for such prisoners, knew well when to move, to hide and to even pass right by them in the shadows, much to Feliciano's surprise. Lovino made sure that Feliciano was always close to him, made sure that no sound came from him and that he wouldn't scream excitedly the closer they got to the cell. They carefully took the last staircase to a dark and humid hall, the only light coming from two torches on the walls. Right now there was no guard in position, but it didn't mean there wouldn't be one soon.

"He's in one of these cellars," Lovino whispered to his brother, "you have around ten minutes before a guard comes to check. Be quick," his last response before he hurried back up to keep vigil. Feliciano was on his own from there on, quite slowly going at his steps, avoiding any sound and searching for which specific cell held him.

Ludwig was at the very last one, with no lights but those of the moon or sun that shone through a small window at the top. He sat, chained against the wall, head gazing down to the floor, in fear, in worry, his thoughts on his beloved, which he hated to see suffering over him. Soon enough he will die and there was no way he could comfort Feliciano before the dreaded hour. His head finally perked at the soft coming footsteps, easily recognizing them, turning to see the very Feliciano he was thinking about open the cell gate easily. Lovino had given him a key earlier.

"Feli-" Ludwig tried to stand and come close, but his space to move had been limited by the chains. Even with Feliciano this close, he could not hold him, touch him, or do anything.

Feliciano eased him to sit, and the prince came close, sitting to the ground, oddly silent.

"Feliciano..." Ludwig whispered, hoping that his voice could pull him to come even closer.

Of course Feliciano could not hold it, and he quickly went to embrace him, settling in his lap, hands caressing his hair and neck dearly, while his face lay on top of his head, to take that delightful scent he loved and had already begun to miss since he had left down the palace steps the night before. Ludwig wanted so badly to let his own hands touch him, but he settled with his cheek on his neck and shoulders, breathing in, kissing and suckling like the many times they had made love. It had Feliciano giving quiet little moans, revealing more of his neck for him to take, wishing they were back at the forest temple, where Ludwig wasn't chained and could truly do what he desired to him. How Feliciano wished he could, right in the cellar, he didn't care about the rest if it meant having him that instant. But Lovino had told him ten minutes, and he wasn't going to ruin his chance now.

After they were content and comfortable enough, Feliciano raised his head to take the man's lips with his, lighting them once again, passionate and loving, beautiful under this coming moonlight. When they broke apart, they settled with the glow the very moon cast upon them, making them both shine beautifully to the other, like the night had prepared them both for this meeting, better than any of the richest fabrics in the palace. Feliciano had been distracted enough with the blue in Ludwig's eyes to forget his wording, to stutter and stay put as he admired him the more.

"I-I'm sorry," he said once he remembered that he was the reason such a fine man was in here. He fell into his hold once again, and it just made Ludwig want to hold him even more, wanting to break the chains that held him, that kept them apart and promised Ludwig to a grim future.

"I beg you, do not feel like this, it's what I rightfully deserve."

"No, you don't deserve this! You deserve to be out there with your family heading home! You deserved the bright future that was awaiting you, and I ruined it, I ruined it with getting too close and letting us fall in love," he wept as it had all been horrible, the worst of pains that could befall, a horrible news to compare to death.

Ludwig wished he could let his hands free to caress those tears away, to move his face so his lips could reach his, to calm him with a touch against his back and shoulders, pulling him more into his heat to make all this sorrow disappear. All he could do for now was a kiss on his temple, lips soothing the area before he placed another to his forehead and then his hair. Feliciano continued to lay his head upon his shoulder, still crying, face turned away as if he was disgraced from it.

"You did not ruin anything,"

"I did, I did, I did!" he muffled between his continuous tears.

"Feliciano!" It was rare for Ludwig to take that tone with him, a commanding one that could stop time if it had sufficient enough power. Feliciano tensed, for it reminded him of the usual scolds he got, afraid that only worst words would come out of Ludwig's mouth.

"Despite what has happened, I do not regret anything I did with you." And his voice became gentle again, the loving one that they both shared and would only use for each other. It was enough to calm Feliciano, to look up to him yet again, only small gathered tears, a hint of

hope in his eyes. "I do not care about what I'll face in the coliseum because of your father's wrath, if it meant having spent my time with you, learning, given your touches, your kisses, your love." How he wished he could extend his hand to take that face, those hands, that body. "I'll suffer this same faith again and again for you."

Feliciano didn't know how to feel about this. He wanted to scold him for being so willing to get hurt for him, but at the same time, he was so proud to know that Ludwig's love was pure, just as his own. His words didn't help with the new flowing of tears, but with it this time was the overflowing of so much emotion, much that Feliciano wanted to word out, but couldn't do more than to lay upon the Germanic's chest, holding him tighter and continuing to hope his tears could calm enough.

"You don't have to, you don't have to," he wept on.

"But I adore you, I love you, forever I promised," Ludwig continued.

He could make him feel so amazing, smile through all this pain and the continuous tears.

"And I you," Feliciano finally said in an understanding voice, beginning to calm slowly as Ludwig kept pressing kisses to his face, caressing while Feliciano continue to lay with him.

"Why are you here though?" He was curious, for he doubted Feliciano could be allowed such easy access when he had been guarded and brought here with such urgency and attentive eyes.

"What do you mean? I came here to see you."

"How did you?"

"Brother helped me,"

"Your brother?" He was dying, "Why?" He had never given him any sort of compassion or kind looks. It always seemed like he had hated him and Ludwig didn't understand for what, since they never really held a proper conversation.

"I told him about my feelings, and he couldn't see me suffer any longer. He thought meeting you could help, so he managed to take me down here without others noticing." His tears had eased somehow, falling now into his comfort, as if ready to take a nap there like it was his own bed.

"Did he really?" Ludwig was having a hard time accepting it and needed more reassurance, hoping that this wasn't some sort of trick.

Feliciano nodded. "He understood me. He is going through a similar situation." He didn't say anymore, not sure how Lovino could take it if Ludwig knew about Antonio.

"Then why can't he speak to your father to release me."

"I hoped the same, but it's not as simple." Feliciano didn't wanted to feel another weigh of dread, he didn't want to think of how impossible it was to release themselves from this, he

just wanted to indulge in their love, in whatever they could and would be left.

“Is there any other way?” Ludwig still hoped on desperately.

Feliciano looked into his eyes, wishing he could really tell him, wishing there was somehow, but he knew there was none. He wept yet again, whispering a very broken “No” to him.

It really did pain Ludwig to not be able to do anything, more so to know there was no escape, his own sorrow so close to releasing itself with his own tears, but he refused to, he would not let Feliciano worry more than he was.

“Feliciano!” A voice had called out, harsh and begging. Feliciano quickly identified it as his brother’s, surely with time to head out before the guards caught them.

He refused so much to leave, but he had to, before they would only worsen their situation. Feliciano indulged in the touch of his face on his hands, taking that beautiful look to be ever so plentiful in his mind forever. He leaned and kissed him with great eagerness, and Ludwig returned it with the same energy, hoping he could glue them together forever in that touch.

“Feliciano! Come on!” Lovino called again, and Feliciano had to stop and leave that instant.

“I love you, forever and ever I will be bound by these feelings for you,” he whispered.

He stood and began to move away, keeping a touch with Ludwig, for as long as he could extend his arm. But alas he could not hold for him all throughout, and suddenly there was only space and air between them.

His sun had left the cell and that’s when Ludwig noticed indeed how dark, cold and lonely this room was.

With Feliciano’s ever so gentle footsteps gone back into whatever halls of the palace, Ludwig was left in silence, with his thoughts and anguish, hoping on for something, gazing to the next coming sun and moon lights for advice on what to do. He thought back to his tribe, the times he would hear travelers talk about Rome, especially to the ones based on the games they had the privilege of seeing. How he loved those stories especially, hoping one day to be part of those many crowds that witnessed the conjoint cheers, the clash of swords and bodies, the blood to be dripped on the dirt, and the showcasing of lions and other animals who battled like the gladiators for their survival. Never did he think that he would be one of the many men that would come to the center of it all, to be killed under the gazing eyes of everyone in the city. As told by Augustus, he would fight, for his life in the impossible, for...that’s when his mind got to thinking, a preposition that could give him if even one short chance.

The two days passed achingly slow to Ludwig. When the guards had come for him, he had felt like the weight of years had been on him, the white and bronze of the halls like new colors, this sun the first in his life. He was given no change the last two days, not even a small basin of water to clean away grime and sweat. He looked way too horrible to be

presented to the emperor, just as Augustus had wanted him, broken and embarrassed, disheveled clothing, hair and even expression.

Augustus had been waiting for him in the throne room, along with senators and his own two sons by his side. Mostly all stood tall, ready to send him off and let the opening to the presentation begin, all but Feliciano, who stared horrified, not standing to see Ludwig in such a way, but he had been told beforehand to stay still and silent, or else there would be consequences. Ludwig could tell that he shook in fear, in worry and nervousness, although his eyes maintained a disguised calm, but even deeper Ludwig could notice him breaking apart.

As soon as Augustus was ready, he stood, proclaiming the judgment he had already made two days ago. Nothing had changed, which meant that it was official and no power in the city or even the empire was enough to stop it.

“Understood? Then, it is time. Ludwig-”

“Wait!” Ludwig called out loudly enough to grab everyone’s attention, giving him silence. He was rather surprised they were willing to hear him, and so he let the silence continue as if to test it. “Even if this is my sentence, is it still just another game to all the other onlookers that would be present?”

They all nodded, although Augustus remained still, wondering why Ludwig would be asking. Was he stalling time? Did he still think he could talk or beg his way out? It would be worthless, Augustus had made up his mind.

“What are you plotting?” He asked, coming closer, purposely making himself stand taller and more intimidating as the guards made Ludwig kneel on the floor.

“As a player, I ask that this becomes more of a challenge and thus I want prizes to be stated.”

All the men in the room stared between themselves curiously, while Augustus smiled, with pity for the still hope Ludwig possessed.

“The chances of coming out alive are slim, it is futile.”

“Humor me at least, take it as a final wish.” Ludwig stared on, both challenging the strength and anger in their eyes.

Augustus laughed, deciding that yes, he should humor him, it could bring him more anguish as he fought in the stadium. Now, what prize could he give in the unlikely event that Ludwig did surpass the game? Riches? Position? His very own freedom? As he looked around him for such inspiration, his eyes landed on his youngest son, whose eyes had never left the prisoner, with a worried and intense stare of longing. He had an idea of what Ludwig wanted then, but didn’t dare vocalize it, if not to embarrass himself in front of his men.

“What is it that you want?” He asked him in a whisper, for only Ludwig to hear and the silence afterwards for him to think about it, even if it was already pretty obvious to both his

mind and heart. Augustus could already suspect, because soon both Ludwig and Feliciano's eyes met, and Ludwig needed no other reminder.

"If I survive whatever you have for me," he spoke loudly, for all to pay attention and so all could know, especially Feliciano, so no hindrance could then fall on Ludwig if he could win. "Not only do I want my freedom, but I also want marriage to your son, Feliciano."

The room quickly erupted into murmurs, of other men coming close and advising Augustus not to agree. They had already planned and organized everything for Feliciano's marriage to Eugenia, and to break it for the likes of a peasant barbarian would be disrespectful to Eugenia's family. But to Feliciano, who heard the prospect, it was finally a great light to everything, and he smiled, for he wouldn't care of the consequences later if it meant marrying Ludwig.

Augustus shushed all the talking with a single raise of his hand. Ludwig still wanted to talk, he wasn't done yet.

"I also ask that whatever imprisonment you have for him here is stopped. You will let him move freely wherever he wants out of the city, only to return if he desires, he'll have my company I can assure you that. That is the prize I wish."

It was ideal to Feliciano and for a moment he let himself believe that this could happen, a prospect that he could take from the hands of destiny right that instant. But he got a grim reminder with the wicked smile on Augustus face, his chuckling and his rather instant reply. "Done"

Already there were disagreements, men begging Augustus to undo this.

"Do you understand that he will go through the wrath of twenty of my finest gladiators set on killing him by my orders. No prisoner or even another gladiator has managed to complete the task, what makes you think a foreigner from the north blinded by love would have the chance?" And it was the words most of the men needed to finally calm, but let Feliciano into turmoil again.

"Take him." The last command that was given before Augustus decided to leave the room, expecting both his sons to follow him out and make their route to the coliseum.

Lovino did follow out, but Feliciano remained, watching intently as Ludwig was beginning to get dragged off to take on their course. No matter how Ludwig was pushed, pulled and even hit, his face remained staring off to his beloved, their gazes not all interrupted even with everything around them. They both wished to hold each other, like they had done two nights ago in the cell, with Ludwig's hands free to take their course across any part of his body.

Would death come out of this? Or did Ludwig and Feliciano have a chance to their freedom and love? Whatever the outcome, Ludwig still had a chance to prove himself, and as he was pulled away he tried to convey a message of promise to Feliciano through his eyes.

"For you," they seemed to whisper.

For him he would fight against twenty strong gladiator men or whatever Augustus decided to throw at him at the stadium. For him he would fight, he would fight for their future and their chance to finally be together with not even the strengths of the empire to stop them.

Chapter End Notes

With Amor Aeternus coming to a close soon (Only two chapters left to finish), it means I must start on a new multichapter story. Problem is, I have too many ideas in my head, all that I would like to do, but Idk which to work on first, so I decided to make a poll so you guys could help me decide that.

Reminder, all these story will have many chapters, some longer or shorter than others.

I will have it up until February 20 and then make the final decision in which I will start.

There are the ideas and then vote for the one you prefer here ->

<http://www.easypolls.net/poll.html?p=56bf8b9de4b0f33c4ec6f1f7>

- Feliciano and the King of Hearts – Cardverse story in which Feli is the Queen of Hearts instead of Kiku. It would be the process on his life having been chosen as Queen by the gods, his childhood with Ludwig, their arranged marriage and how Feliciano adapts to the castle and royal life.

- A Venetian Cinderella – As the title suggest, a Cinderella with a Venetian twist, with Feli as Cinderella and Lud as the prince.

- La Venezia – A continuation to one of my one shots that has to do with a Villain!Feli and Superhero!Ludwig.

- The Society of Romulus and Remus – In which Romulus and Remus were actual people that hunted the supernatural, and were better known for their knowledge in taming werewolves (either hunting them, curing them or even keeping one as a slave or servant). They created a society under their name for this specific hunting, spread across the world. They leave their descendants to be in charge of it, leaving them with special wolf marks as a show of their heredity and duty to take charge of the society. Ludwig is from a long line of werewolves, wanting to actually change his circumstances for a better life, and Feliciano, one of Romulus and Remus great grandsons gifted with the mark, decides to try and help him fulfill this.

- Good luck, Friedrich – Based off Good Luck Charlie, an omegaverse story in which Ludwig and Feliciano have seven kids...yep, seven kids. With the newest and last addition to their family, the little Friedrich Gilbert, the rest of the Beilschmidt-Vargas decide to make video diaries showing or talking about moments of their lives growing up in Switzerland in a German-Italian family as guidance to their younger brother in surviving their crazy family.

- World High Academy Musical – Based off High School Musical, and one of my most...cliché ideas to the point that it could be a parody and I don't even know how I can make my writing...musical, but going to the idea: Feliciano, having moved just recently to Germany from Italy due to business with his grandfather is scheduled to start in World High Academy, a prestigious private school famous for having students of different national backgrounds and from high prestige titles. Feliciano feels like he'll have a hard time blending in, for his grandfather is only the owner of a very small chain of Italian restaurants when others around him have parents who are CEOs, presidents, prime ministers, philanthropists, movie stars, singers and even sport players. He hopes to simply excel in art, eat and meet all the lovely girls of the academy. That all changes when he begins to befriend Ludwig, a star player in the school's Football team.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Like a slave he was dragged across the path through the city that led to the coliseum. Those who could not have the pleasure of visiting the coliseum themselves for this match, stared on, with pity, curiosity or even with mocks as to what was to happen to him. Rumors quickly spread, trying to figure out why the Germanic traveler that they had seen the last few days with the prince was being sentenced to death in the coliseum. Some thought that maybe he had assaulted or even tried to kill the prince, others blaming it on the emperor's overprotectiveness over his youngest son. No matter his reason, it was still a spectacle that all wanted to witness, crowds even gathering on either side of the paths created for him.

With the guards keeping Ludwig's head down the entire time, he couldn't witness the stares, but only listen and feel the stinging heat of the sun on the bare of his back.

It was relieving to feel a shadow, giving him a chance to breathe, even if he knew it meant that they were finally there, taken under the arches and the rumble and cheers of people coming and taking their seat. He couldn't see well where exactly he was going, but he could tell they were taking him down, below it all, in darkness and with the foulest of smells. He was pulled through tighter and tighter walls until he was pushed into a rather small space, with an even smaller lighting that didn't give him much to see. The bars behind him were shut close and the guards moved away to leave him, Ludwig wondering his purpose there.

"Change!" A passing man commanded to him, dressed in his gladiator wear, well prepared and even looking ferocious and powerful. In other circumstances, Ludwig would have loved to admire it.

Ludwig had to look around him well to find a similar wear for himself in this small cellar. It surprised him to know how fine it was, something more fit for a centurion than a prisoner like himself. A golden armor engraved with the finest symbols of the empire, red cape, golden sash and even the appropriate foot wear. Surely Augustus must be mocking him with all this, probably for him to put one last show before the finishing blow. Ludwig glared at the clothing, like he was glaring right at the emperor, with great fury inside him ready to be released in a fight. A show he'll give him then, and then he'll see who'll be mocking who for when he wins. He wanted to keep himself that confident. He knew he was strong, he knew he had both Germanic and now Roman moves to aid him and the awaiting prize of his beloved, a wonderful future for the both of them if he managed to win this. He looked once more around him and found an old sword, not at all suited for what he was to go through, and a little golden shield, not even enough to guard his wrist or shoulders. Augustus seemed to continue to mock him with useless weapons, but he still took them, made himself used to them by swinging them and hitting the small walls. He made some small exercises, enough to stretch all his bones and muscles, preparing himself like he was simply going to the training grounds. As he did so, he finally noticed the sounds that came from the outside, of the rumble, shouts and even hard steps against the heavy grounds. He heard other commotions as

well, much closer, rushing steps, growls and even shouts of fury and battle. A game must be going right that instant above him and surely he would be next in the act.

He continued to train what he could, already coating him in sweat and adding more to the horrific scent in the air. He had been too distracted to notice the stare of yet another man, admiring his skill and even force. It was finally time to get the barbarian going. He tapped the bars harshly, halting the other completely, the man staring back into an icy blue stare. It seemed to glow in this darkness, like that of a wolf's before it pounced on its prey.

"It's time," the other man told him, finally opening the gates and ushering him to the doors that he was to take into the arena in only a matter of minutes.

Ludwig surprisingly didn't feel the fear, nor intimidated by the large doors that would lead him to his faith. Here the cheers became much clearer, not even the tight walls around him enough to sustain them. It must be a large crowd, probably the entire city there to witness him. Two other guards at his side dared laugh, seeing the barbarian too confident for what would be his sure death, especially with that tacky clothing, like he was an actor that had taken a detour as he was making his way to the theater. Ludwig had grown such a fury that he was close to punching them both in the face, but instead his gripped tightened on the handle of his sword. He would not be distracted, he would instead focus on his strengths.

A horn was blown and that instant the gates in front of him began to rise, revealing the biggest and brightest sun Ludwig had probably seen in his stay in Rome. Other than the heat, he truly got to witness the amount of people there, filling every corner of the rising seats, standing, cheering, and an array of colors excited for the show. He was impressed, moving forward but also gazing around him, larger and larger amount of people coming new into his sight, some booing and others cheering, jumping, clapping, or throwing fists into the air. Ludwig wanted to hope it was some sign of good luck.

As his turn finished, right in front of him was a pavilion that was refinedly decorated, in the imperial symbols, with shade, food and even guards to watch over the three people that sat upon the comfiest chairs in the whole stadium. The three of them were dressed as properly as this was supposed to be another feast, Augustus with a constant smirk and Lovino surprisingly worried and tense. Feliciano, Ludwig had to comment, looked as magnificent as ever, under all these riches looking like a true treasure. He was as tense as his brother, hands gripping tightly on the rest of his chair and Ludwig could tell from his distance that he was shaking, holding down tears from staining more his face, already marked enough by the passing agony of knowing he'll have to be there to see his own lover die by the hands of his own people.

There was still the challenge, he thought, there was still a chance that this could turn for the lighter. As Ludwig moved ever so closer to the area in the arena close to their pavilion, Feliciano was more reminded of it, Ludwig showing bravery and strength that gave him ever such growing hopes, finally a little smile on his lips, enough of a reassurance for Ludwig to fight on.

He stood before them, standing strong even if he was below them in the sandy pits, already stained with blood from the past fights.

Augustus stood and the whole stadium went into a sudden disturbing silence. It continued on as Augustus gazed on to Ludwig, a glare ever so intense, hoping to bring him down from his mere stare. He then addressed to his public, welcoming them all to the games in a friendly fashion that did not seem at all like the emperor Ludwig had gotten to know in the last few days. He addressed his crime, although he didn't go into much detail, not wanting to damage his own name along with his family in front of all the eyes of Rome.

"Let it begin, and Ludwig, let's see if you can prove your worth." Was the closest of luck he could give him before he sat back.

Another horn was sounded and this time Ludwig turned to see all gates to the walls of the arena open, each one revealing five gladiators, each with ready armor, strong and shining swords, long shields that could defend against the strongest of armies, an array of other items and weapons to use, all with their pointed eyes at him, preparing all their arsenal for the kill they hoped was instant. They seemed to give Ludwig a break, a nice beginning for him to prepare, showing his old sword and small shield, worthless compared to the others.

This was going to be easy.

With a readying scream from one of the many, they all rushed forward, ready to easily attack him with a single slash of their swords or pushes by their shields. Ludwig joined in as well, headfirst going into the mess, sword and even his small shield ready for his first kill.

They all conjoined in a mess of crashing shields, all with combine effort trying to push Ludwig to the floor, where they could spear him in his place. It didn't work as hoped, Ludwig was strong enough to maintain himself standing, no matter the bumps he got, his little shield helping in pushing back. Men began to try and slash him with swords, Ludwig being quick enough to defend himself by slashing back in the meet of shining metal, his shield also helping to avoid attacks from other directions.

In that continued meet of weapons against weapons, a single gladiator had though he had an opening to his waist. As Ludwig was busy defending two other men who came at him still with their shields, he struck, but Ludwig was quicker and the slash that was meant for his own waist was given to the other gladiator, the first coating of blood on Ludwig's sword. The man fell unconscious to the floor, whimpering and trying to get up, but a kick and push from Ludwig gave him no other chance. The rest of the men stood still as they looked on with great surprise, not all expecting the barbarian to rid of one of them with great skill and still looking like he was intent on doing the same to the rest of them.

They wouldn't dare give him such a chance.

Another man went forward, wanting to avenge for his falling companion, but Ludwig had pierced his sword unto his shoulder, then dropping him off alongside the other.

More blood to decorate his sword, even his own arm.

The next one who came at him, he tripped easily, once again pushing and kicking. It wasn't enough for the other, he would stand anytime soon and go at him with greater force.

It was harder to get the other men like he had done the first three, a continuous meet of swords and shields, seeming to form a chorus for the cheer of people around them. In a moment of weakness, he had his neck slashed, a pain enough to have him kneeling to the floor, where a man had the chance to push him and kick him still in his place. Another man was ready to stab him with a trident, but Ludwig noticed his approach on time, and like a wolf, sprang back up and fought on with his sword. The other man had tried to distract him with his net, and it did for Ludwig to get a couple of scratches, but his focus couldn't be deterred so easily, his sword kept meeting with his trident in growing blows, each one seeming like it could end either of them if it could pierce skin. There was a moment of hesitation, a stop, a chance the other took, but Ludwig went with a stronger blow and the use of his shield, having the man down. While in his momentary victory for the downfall of one man, another one took the time to wrap him in his own net, hoping to pierce him while Ludwig was distracted with the mess. Ludwig was quick to take it away, now keeping it in his hold for later use and avoiding the blows that were planned for him. He threw the net and slashed as soon as it landed, earning a cry and another drop. He ran and dealt with another one that was coming at him from far off, slashing him as well, another cry, more blood and a growing amount of bodies on the floor.

It was quite cruel how the crowds cheered on, a part of him proud that it was all for himself. In that moment where he took all that glory, staring to all the assembled people above him, a man came and took his sword, ready to use his own weapon against him. Ludwig was quick to punch him, dropping, kicking and taking his own spear to stab him. Another one came for him, an easy twist to take him to the ground, another stab, more blood to the ground and the new weapons Ludwig had acquired.

There was a sudden break, no one was coming near him and all the other gladiators stood far off, clear fear in their eyes, still trying to think on how they could deal with this barbarian menace now that he proved stronger than what Augustus had made them believe. More armor was thrown at them, which they quickly prepared before Ludwig could go ahead and stop them. Ludwig gave them the chance though, staring at how more metal covered more of their bodies.

Ludwig was handed nothing, he had to continue fighting as he was. He expected as much from Augustus.

Ready, they all walked with easy pace towards him, a part of them still fearful, afraid of falling like the rest of them had already done, even with the new armor that shone on them. They came closer and closer, until they rounded the blond in all directions. They kicked dust all around, hoping to get Ludwig's eyes stung and once again distract him. It was futile and they were back at it, in the movement of clashing swords and shields, Ludwig starting to swing in all directions, for he couldn't see through the cloud that had arisen. A shield was smacked at his face, and he had fallen. The men tried to get him when he was down, but no matter the hurt and the dizzy feeling in his head, Ludwig stood and fought on, even if he couldn't make sense or even see correctly what was going on around him.

A hit once again to his gut, he stood, now with clearer air as the dust began to disperse, seeing how all the men's eyes were glued on him, each with different strategies and ways of getting him down yet again. Ludwig wouldn't give them the chance, he fought for a long

time without a single fall, but the gladiators that still stood proved a much larger challenge, for they refused to fall as he had done and were not going to disappoint their emperor.

Well he wasn't going to disappoint the prince.

The sudden image in his head, of the morning Feliciano had awoken by his side after the first time they had made love, shinning beautifully, an adoring smile, big eyes that greeted him with the biggest joy Ludwig had ever seen on a human.

He hit someone hard with his shield, then slashing him with the very edges, another to the floor. He forcefully took an ax from one of them, using the very weapon to slash his hand off. Another one, vengeful, threw himself at him and even tried to bite him or pummel him to the ground. He was not given the chance as Ludwig had stabbed a sword laying on the ground against him, staining him more in blood, cries of agony above him, somehow stronger than the cheers still continuing around him. As Ludwig pushed him away, another tried to go at him, Ludwig able to defend himself with continuous meets of metal with the ax he had taken. He took a shield from one of the laying men, pushing the man away, easily scarring his face. While he was distracted with the hit, Ludwig slashed at his feet and he was on the ground, in great agony and pain, filling more of the arena in shouts.

He continued to fight on with his bare fists, pushing and kicking to the ground many, forgetting about the dropped weapons, an array that he could take from and make his continuous battle simpler.

All this force of his body, constant, was only making him weaker, his strengths not enough to bring men to unconsciousness. He picked a spear and continued with his ambush, taking another man, for a moment forgetting how his body was beginning to drain as he continued to take the last few men down, with the same spear, a trip, a kick, an occasional stab with a sword or an ax. There were only but a few men left, but in Ludwig's vision they seemed to duplicate in a haze, making his own anguish extend, causing him great distress, but he still managed to fight on, the same image of a smiling Feliciano on his head.

He began taking weapons and throwing them carelessly in the air, not caring where they hit, but with the occasional cry, once or twice they hit the mark.

As it continued, he noticed that there wasn't as many people going at him, the amount of bodies on the floor growing, Ludwig having already tripped over several of them.

Did he finally take them all? Did he win? Could he finally rest?

He kneeled to the floor thinking so, for the first time breathing, letting himself feel, rest for once.

An intense stab took him at his shoulder. He gave a great shout, enough to overcome the roar of the whole stadium. A quick glance revealed to him that he was taken by an arrow, now stuck on the back of his shoulder, the armor that had been there to protect it taken by one of the gladiators as he had fought. His breathing became much harder, and it only worsened as Ludwig tried to take more, as a way to keep himself awake, to even just sit up, the pain too much to even stand and take his vengeance from the man that had done this to him.

He would take him, it would be simple he thought. He tried to reach for one of the laying swords, but even that reach became hard to him, his reach to the floor instead coming closer and closer, just as the man reached him, ready to take the final blow with his trident, to surpass the barbarian and for his fate to be met. Many cheered on the gladiator that was to take the barbarian, already begging for his kill, and there were also words of encouragement, a call to get Ludwig up, to defeat his challenge imposed by the emperor.

All that was left was but one man. But Ludwig couldn't get the energy, it seemed so hard and distant. He began to accept that he would leave, into the world of gods that he knew would take him after how he had fought in the coliseum of Rome. The rest of the crowd could see that he lay defeated, a proud smile on Augustus's face, Lovino hesitant, and then Feliciano, who couldn't take it, couldn't continue to let this happen, stood and ran, over to the edge, the guards coming and trying to get him to sit back in his chair, afraid that he would jump over to the arena and take on the gladiator himself.

"Ludwig!" He called out, "Ludwig! Stand up! Please stand up and fight! There's only one man left!"

"Please, your highness," one of the guards begged as he tried to ease Feliciano back into his chair.

"Ludwig! Ludwig!" Feliciano continued to call out, not daring to let himself leave his spot until he saw the other stand, until he grew the strength, until he could prove that he could go against the last obstacle left to their union.

"Ludwig!" He let this shout draw out, echo all across the coliseum, enough for Ludwig to stop listening to the great crowd or the breaths of the gladiator above him.

He heard Feliciano, the calling of his name, his begging voice, his still hope, his belief in him and his dependency for the future he wanted. Even if it pained him and broke him, he would continue to try, there was too much at stake.

He quickly picked an ax and defended himself just in time from the blow, Ludwig using the force to stand and try to push his opponent, but it turned harder than he expected and they were off in the constant of meets, a dance of battle where Ludwig regained his energy to continue to partake.

It was a continuous match that let the coliseum to an anxious silence, many having to stand up to take a better look, easing their breaths, as if afraid that their mere air could distract the two contestant that continued to fight on with incredible force, each blow seeming like it could end the other, but again and again they managed sufficient blocks, that end the crowd awaited extended and extended. Even Augustus and Lovino shook in their seats, and Feliciano still stood on, eyes on Ludwig, knowing every move and skill, for he had seen him use it in his training, which had been successful and had even got him winning against men from the Roman army. If it worked for him there, surely it could work here.

"Come on, come on, please!" He begged under his breath, a part of him hoping that Ludwig could just feel the plead, hoping it could energize him, give the final blow that could give him his winning.

In the frenzy, Ludwig, by a mere footing, lost his rhythm, and there was left an opening, the gladiator ready to take it, disappearing in a spin behind him to stab the Germanic by his back. There were loud gasps from the entire crowd, and already Feliciano was preparing himself to cry in loud agony and drop to the floor hoping to forever stay there. But in an instant that Ludwig detected with quick wit, he spotted just the right opening that could give him a chance. It was a matter of a millisecond that he took. Precise he did, and his sword slashed at the other's waist, stopping the other from continuing with the direction of his attack.

The final gladiator was down on the floor, whimpering and gushing to decorate more of the bloodied floor.

The coliseum went into a sudden silence as their eyes tried to take what was so clear before them.

The only man standing was Ludwig, around a mess of Emperor Augustus's best men, all down on the floor defeated. Even Ludwig joined them in their silence, heavily breathing, still waiting for a jab from another man and for him to continue with this excruciation. But nothing, only but the combined silence of the crowd.

When they knew that the winner was ever so clear as the seconds passed on, it erupted like the suddenness of a volcano. Noise filled the stadium yet again, cheers, jumps, clapping, an array that made Ludwig realize, look up and finally look to all their eyes with pride and even wonderment.

He had won, he had beaten the challenge, he was victorious and it meant the prize would be given to him.

Sure, he was tired, he was scarred, bruises worsening his state, his own blood and even other's sprayed in a mess of dirt and sweat on his skin. He was of no way to present himself, to walk yet again to the pavilion, where Augustus stared on with immense shock, Lovino with a smirk, and Feliciano with the most gorgeous of smiles, embracing one of the pillars as dearly as if he was holding him. Feliciano didn't care if Ludwig was battle worn, a mess to be compared to the lowliest of slaves, to him he still shone just as beautiful and wonderful, a husband to want and be proud of.

Ludwig stared off to the emperor, no exact emotion, but only there as proof of what he did.

He took his sword, his shield and one of the axes he used. He presented them to the emperor, damaged and bloodied with the effort of his men. After he made sure Augustus had stared at them enough, he threw them harshly to the ground, to create an alarming sound, one that the crowds around him joined in. It was just the noise Ludwig wanted, the noise he wanted Augustus to hear, to truly show him he was done.

All his men were beaten, he was the only one who stood, he had won and as so, he wanted him to be reminded of what he was to give himself, as well as Feliciano.

Augustus then stood, and Ludwig was expecting harsh shouts and some curses, but to his surprise, the emperor just left the pavilion, in a furious rage that Ludwig could even notice in the harsh swish of his cape and hardened walking. By his order and that of the guards,

Lovino followed behind and even Feliciano did, but not before throwing him one last smile and even a kiss, which earned a smile from Ludwig, wishing he could follow him through those halls, out already to what awaited them.

He was never called to leave, no one came to show him out, only but one man to give him a new set of clothes and to rid of the arrow that was on his shoulder. Others came to clean the arena, picking the dead men or the ones wounded who needed instant attention in hopes of getting better. Ludwig watched the crowds leave, emptying the coliseum until he was the only one left, gazing up to the passing sun, the late afternoon approaching and enveloping everything in the warmest and most beautiful orange and bronze colors. He liked this calm, and in that moment he felt glad to have not left yet, for he enjoyed this peace, feeling somehow clean with his new clothing, even with all his remaining dirt and drying blood under it.

He heard a man approach, hoping for once it was somebody to pick him up and lead him out, to his family or to even the palace. He turned, and was meant with his own very glowing sun, a smile as radiant, clean and even ready for him. They stood apart for the longest moment, only increasing their want, their desperation for each other's hold.

Feliciano couldn't take it any longer, and he rushed off, through the dirt, the harsh gleams of the sun and even the dust that arose and dirtied his leg and even white toga. Ludwig ran off after him as well, hands extended and it didn't take long for that very opening to be taken by his prince, embracing the other tightly, mending, breathing and then finally kissing.

To hell who saw, to hell who dared try to push them away, to halt such a moving embrace, such a lively kiss that continued even with the movement of the sun. It didn't matter anymore, when Ludwig had rightfully fought for him, when their future could be tied, that this wouldn't be the last kiss or embrace, that they had so much awaiting for the both of them, and they would see and go through them together.

This loving union, in the center of the coliseum under the setting sun, was the true beginning of a promise.

Chapter End Notes

I don't think I'm very proud of the match scene. I'm not used to writing them, but I still tried my best. I hope you enjoyed it though, and hope to hear comments on how I can fix them.

Also, Ludwig probably wouldn't have ended up as hurt if he just decided to sing we will rock you, Romans love the classics.

Chapter after this one would be the last.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Feliciano felt like he could fly. Into either the intense blue of the sky, or the blue of the sea before him, rushing forward, enveloping his feet in foam. Feliciano welcomed it, came ever closer to its depths, soaking already the hem of his fresh new toga prepared for this trip. He breathed in the air, the most fresh he had ever taken, more so than the sweet aroma of flowers from the palace. He felt new, free, soaring like the very birds that flew above him.

What a majestic view, what beauty, he wanted to dive into the waters, swim and never return, forever in the coolness and the mysterious depths that were bound to grant even more adventures.

A hand grasped his, and he turned to this time meet the blue of his betrothed's eyes. He regretted that moment thinking he could ever leave to the sea, when he had in earth, in the shores, this man for him, who yearned for him and held him tightly into his arms, both together gazing into the infinite horizon in the distance.

"It's..." Feliciano didn't think beautiful was enough, no word in his mind could truly describe what he saw, what he felt and even smelled.

Ludwig easily understood, and only smiled down at him as his hand caressed at his waist, adding more to the feel of the moment.

"Thank you," Feliciano only whispered, not daring disturb the nature around him. "Thank you so much for taking me here, I never thought I'd-" he was afraid to start embarrassingly weeping, for the surroundings were just too much for his very own happiness to take.

Ludwig kissed the side of his head in hopes to ease him and it so quickly did, for Feliciano was looking up to him, raised his hand to rub at his jaw, pulling him then to kiss his lips. The sea, as that kiss, was real, he was there and he was experiencing such love and dedication, with a man he truly loved and was to marry one day.

"Ludwig! Uncle said you had enough time! We must continue!" Roderich called out from the trees, having just arrived from a near village after supplying with Aldrich and wanting to leave the couple alone.

Ludwig nodded, pulling from Feliciano, but not the hold of his hand, which Feliciano remained with and easily followed Ludwig back up the sandy shores, back to the harsh grounds of solid floor and grass, the prince continuously looking back, for he still couldn't get enough of the extensive blue. But sadly, as they continued, it began to disappear behind them, instead, new fields, lands, rivers and mountains were presented for Feliciano to witness for the first time. He pointed to everything and asked on and on like a child would. Roderich found it annoying, and many times had to cover his ear to find some peace with the rushing winds they met. Aldrich adored it, having been a long time since he had to explain even how

the alps managed to reach such high altitudes, with stories of their people that Ludwig had heard enough of, but to Feliciano, it was like being introduced to a whole new world.

They were given an extra horse by the empire, even a bigger cart to bring more materials, a lot of the space occupied by things that belonged to Feliciano. The extra horse was used by Roderich, since Feliciano instead wanted to share a horse with Ludwig, arms wrapped around his waist tightly, many times resting on his shoulder, in such a serene way that Ludwig didn't know how to wake him.

Augustus, although clearly disappointed and mad, had to reluctantly help with Feliciano's decision on leaving, even getting him new clothes, items and then having to face Ludwig, as he in the future is supposed to be part of his own family. He had to push aside his pride, for Feliciano he did, and because he still wanted to make something clear to Ludwig.

No matter what he thought of him, what he did, how he acted and treated him, Augustus still wanted desperately for Ludwig to promise that he would take good care of Feliciano no matter where they went. Ludwig pushed aside his own anger to tell him that he would do so no matter if it was a command by an emperor or not.

Their wedding would have to wait, for there were still matters to be changed, like annulling the old engagement between Feliciano and Eugenia. In the meantime, Feliciano headed off with Ludwig to Germania, to spend some time with his future husband's people, get to know the culture and just for Feliciano to travel, explore and see more of their beloved empire and continent. After a good amount of time, Ludwig and Feliciano would return to Rome to truly get married.

Augustus wanted to hope that Feliciano would hate it, hate their lowly living style, their poor taste and even cold weather, enough to have him running back and having his old life of riches back. It was a worry that was persistent on Ludwig's mind as they continued onwards.

After seeing what a poor state his tribe was in, would Feliciano still want a life with him? He prayed to his gods, and even Feliciano's that he would, that his love could even take resting in shabby little houses they built of wood and old rocks and bricks.

As they came closer and closer, the bewilderment in the prince never left, loving the small tribes they already met on the way, with people just as eager to meet a prince of Rome. Ludwig hoped he though the same of his own tribe, hoped that his people would get along just as well.

New houses had been raised with the coming of Gilbert and his own men from battle. It was a perfect time for his arrival, for Aldrich, Ludwig and Roderich's own arrival was expected as well, and from the letters they last sent, it seemed there was a fourth member with them, who by Aldrich's orders was to be attended with the best they had. He didn't specify who, but with the eagerness it seemed to be gravely important, so the villagers did their best to prepare the tribe, even Gilbert joining along, as curious about this new man coming. They hunted the best animals and even had them decorating large plates, with an array of other fruits and nuts that they had to scavenge rather desperately for.

There was worry that there wouldn't be enough for other days.

Gilbert was busy with helping the women on getting some flowers to decorate with the entire village when the sound of coming horses arrived. They all stopped what they were doing and rushed to meet with their king and prince, plus to know who this mysterious member they had prepared greatly for was.

They had made their entrance much like the last time, with an awaiting crowd that was cheering on their return. Aldrich was the first to dismount from his horse, wanting to greet Gilbert, who he hadn't seen in many months. Gilbert embraced him eagerly, trying with all his strength to keep him in the hold even as Aldrich tried to pull away. Roderich dismounted, holding tightly to a chest which he never let go of. In it he had all the items he had gotten in Rome, all he was excited to show some of his friends. Gilbert couldn't wait to mock his cousin, and was already pointing and snickering to the chest. Roderich did what he had learned to do ever since they were both children. Glare, huff, and walk along, forgetting his presence until Gilbert continued pestering and it ended with a slap or a calling of each other's parents so they could scold Gilbert.

Now, Ludwig.

There was a sudden silence as he dismounted, helping down the fourth figure, so careful and with the gentlest hold that they had ever seen him give someone. Whoever this person was, he looked to him and even held like the care of a husband to his wife and the other man easily settled in his hold, smiling to him, shy to move to the crowds that wanted to meet him. As he came closer, the carriage and horses out of the way, the light of the clear day seemed to befall only for him. He was wearing a loose white fabric, tugged and decorated in gold, along with golden bracelets and even his thin sandals seeming richer than their boots. No doubt he was Roman, they could all easily tell, but still they were intrigued by him, for the only Romans they had learned to meet were the ruffian soldiers at the wall or the ones that had dared invade them with brutality and menace. This boy was nothing like they had seen. He had a gentle and young face, beautiful and petite, quite a contrast to their larger prince. He smiled kindly and waved a hand of peace to all of them, no hidden intentions of betrayal or any ounce for want of attack. They were captivated by him, already many of the young girls wishing his name, wanting to get close, talk to him, for he seemed like he could sing all his words. Even the men were just as captivated, not even knowing how they could address someone like him.

"This is his highness, prince of Rome, Feliciano."

They all gasped, and even a near woman had dropped the bouquet of flowers she was preparing.

"Your village is absolutely stunning and it is indeed a great honor to meet my betrothed's people."

This time a man had dropped the logs he had fetched for a fire, adding to the incredulous stares of the people as they gazed on to both the men in front of them, thinking it all an illusion or a dream.

It was unheard of them for a man to marry another, but Ludwig introduced Feliciano as if it had always been the custom. His tribe didn't question it further, instead, they welcomed in Feliciano, they fed him, showed him around their small enclosure and some of the women were already sewing special clothing for him. Gilbert had instantly adored him, already calling him another brother and telling Ludwig how lucky he had been, slightly jealous even. Many had asked over what had happened in their stay in Rome, curious to know as to how Ludwig managed to get betrothed to a Roman prince. It would probably be a story for another fire or feast, Ludwig was too distracted with making sure that Feliciano was being attended to even stay long enough with other men.

They feasted the night, one Feliciano had enjoyed immensely speaking with others, learning of their dialects, customs, and trying food of theirs he had never even heard of. Despite how he had told Ludwig that he had enjoyed it, Ludwig could still see his sour face, even notice as he had spitted out some of the food for the dogs. He reminded himself that maybe he would have to trade at the walls for food of familiarity if it continued like this.

As the days passed, many worries filled the tribe as well as Ludwig himself.

With Ludwig having chosen another man as his mate, there had been worry over an heir. Gilbert had shown no interest in any of the ladies in the tribe and he came with no stories of maidens from far away in his battles. To calm the worry of his people, Ludwig decided that he would adopt one of the orphan tribe children, take the child as his son and prepare him for the ruling after himself.

A new lineage would start, but at least they could trust in Ludwig's judgment for a next good ruler. That had helped to settle the village, but it hadn't settled Ludwig's unease concerning Feliciano.

Feliciano seemed happy here. He easily befriended everyone and they all took a great liking to him, accepting him as if he had always been in the tribe. He liked to gaze to the woods and many times had joined Ludwig on his hunting or his visits to the lakes and rivers. Sometimes they would bring with them blankets, settle off in some private part of the woods and make love without worries of being seen or even heard (Feliciano tended to be loud and he couldn't stand having the village know what he would do with his beloved in the late hours under the blankets). They would stay for long moments in each other's embrace, gazing to the sky, playing with each other's hair and conversing before the night forced them back to the village for dinner.

There was a lot of work in the village that Feliciano was expected to fulfill but proved to be too much for the gentile prince. Not that he didn't try, he did, especially when Ludwig had no other choice than to command him to, but it was never sufficient. He had already received complains about how Feliciano didn't bring enough items, didn't come back on time, didn't have strength to move large objects or they had caught him sneaking off to speak with the women or picking flowers to then give such women flowers crowns or bouquets. It was like he was just another young maiden in the village. Ludwig would have no choice than to scold him, regretting it always when he saw how Feliciano pouted, shook, and saw as his eyes watered. He had to continuously embrace him to make sure that everything was okay and that

it didn't change how he strongly felt about him, he just wanted to make it clear to him that he needed him to work harder.

Ludwig had to remind himself that Feliciano was a prince who lived all his life closed in a palace bigger than his own tribe, where everything was done for him and it would have continued to be if Ludwig hadn't taken him away.

One night, after they had prepared a new route for better access to a river, with even new homes and fields to grow their food, Ludwig returned home exhausted, hurt even, especially after what had happened to Feliciano.

The young roman boy had hurt himself with a fallen stone, plus fainted from the sudden force that was rather harshly asked from him and the heat of the day. He was taken to their healers and they did well to return him back to normal, but they asked that Feliciano rested inside for a couple of days. The situation worked as a reminder to how it seemed impossible that Feliciano could adapt to barbaric life, and that it seemed with each passing day that Feliciano would one day come to him begging for his return to his father and brother back in Rome. It was all a reminder that he could lose him, that Feliciano's want of his riches would be greater than the sacrifices Ludwig had made to bring him here, that truly their love was not meant for the length of forever and it brought him with such agony that he even felt like weeping into the palm on his hand.

"Ludwig! Kellig is such a sweetheart, she-" Feliciano had stopped his joyful entrance and interruption into the room, noticing the hand on Ludwig's face, his heavy breathing and even tremble. Feliciano wasted no time in sitting by his side, pulling him towards him, caressing his hair and soothing him with little hums, especially songs that Feliciano had seen the mothers sing to their children.

Feliciano was too kind, too perfect, a blessing that the gods might have though he deserved. Ludwig couldn't believe that such beautiful and small moments could easily be taken away from him, and it just made him weep the more, holding to him, afraid that he could slip off just as he thought he would. Feliciano didn't say a word, but touched and continued to hum, both then easily resting in their now shared bed, the Roman letting it all subside slowly, at any pace Ludwig wanted until he felt comfortable enough to speak. Ludwig placed a kiss to his shoulders, wrapping his arms and pulling him against him, legs intertwined, blankets over them, surely ready for another rest into the night.

"Please, please, please, don't ever leave me," Ludwig begged, a whisper although it was clear to the other and enough to keep him awake, widened eyes looking down to his partner.

"Of course! I wouldn't dare! I love you too much to ever leave. Why would you think that?" Feliciano look terrified, as if just the mere thought in Ludwig's mind could be enough to take him back.

Ludwig remained in an uncomfortable silence, Feliciano maintaining a stare, hoping to hear, hands soothing at his cheeks, the prince easing close to place many kisses upon the places tears had run down on.

“Do you miss Rome?” Ludwig asked, his voice and emotions controlled enough to be able to speak.

“I do, it was my home for many years.”

“Do you wish to return?” And the hurt was back in his eyes and in that instant Feliciano understood his sorrows.

He eased even closer, looking with immense truth in his eyes, hoping Ludwig could confide in all the true words he was to tell him.

“I do wish to return, but only for our wedding and always by your side on occasional visits.”

It had eased Ludwig, enough to control his breathing and even settle down any stress he used in his body from the melancholy.

“This village is my home now.”

“But is it to your liking? It’s not large, we don’t have any riches, we live between the woods with barely enough people. We all have to pitch in and work and I do not have any servants or slaves to treat to you, and not even the finest clothing.” He grabbed at the simple green tunic Feliciano wore, one Helga had made for him.

It was as he expected, their clothing did not suit him at all, but even now, with a glowing smile in the dark, he shone and was happy about it, as if it could be better than anything he was used to wearing in the palace.

“Ludwig, sure this place is nothing like Rome, but it’s not any less. It’s beautiful, the people are just wonderful and this is your village and home. I prefer it over imprisonment in the palace, forced to live my life with a woman I didn’t love. Things are hard for me, but I will learn and I’ll try to make my life with you here. You’ll adopt that little boy and I can help you raise it. We’d be like a family together.”

Such a sweet image and promise, a great ease in Ludwig that had him smiling, all ailments suddenly disappeared as he let it fade off with Feliciano’s hold.

“Forever?” Ludwig asked, tired, already beginning to settle into sleep.

“In Aeternum,” Feliciano yawned before joining him in his dreams.

It was a beautiful clear day, perfect for their new travel, Aldrich and Gilbert ahead, Ludwig and Feliciano behind in their own horse, carrying the carriage.

“Alessandro,” Feliciano suggested, a smirk as he lay on his shoulder, looking up to his lover, in a couple of days soon to be his husband, hoping he’d finally take the name.

“I think it’s a little too soon to be thinking of names, for all we know the original mother would have already named the child.”

“I’m just suggesting if anything,” Feliciano chuckled.

It was expected after both the princes returned from Rome, married, they would be given a child to raise, from among the ones in Ludwig’s tribe. They wouldn’t know if they would get a newborn or even grown one, but Feliciano was loving the idea of taking a baby and caring for it like his father had taking care of him or he had seen the mothers in the tribe take care of their own children.

“Heinrich,” Ludwig suggested back after a good silence, and Feliciano couldn’t help but smile.

“Listen, after Rome, I talked to father and Gilbert and they accepted my request.”

“What request? What are we doing after Rome?”

“I was thinking if perhaps you wanted to continue our journey to Gaul? Then Hispania, perhaps we could even go to Britannia, but Gilbert said-” Feliciano didn’t have to hear anymore, his eyes had already turned big with clear acceptance.

Ludwig probably mentioned more places, went on with what they could do, the problems they could face but Gilbert and Aldrich would be there with them to help so both can meet more outside the walls of their city or village.

“-the village doesn’t expect us that quick and-”

“I’d love to,” Feliciano agreed, resting his head upon his back, cuddling and enough to halt any other words Ludwig had in hopes of his acceptance.

He should have expected as much. After a life being closed, seeing the route from Rome to Germania and Ludwig’s village woke up a sense for more adventure, to see everything that he could before they decided to settle off in Ludwig’s village, finally married and taking care of two adorable twin boys who were left orphaned by a father who had died at battle and a mother that died giving them birth. They would name them Heinrich and Alessandro and in them Ludwig and Feliciano hoped two good leaders for their future. It was a chance to give them the freedom their own parents didn’t give them, but the eternal love their parents taught them and Ludwig and Feliciano would always have for each other.

Chapter End Notes

Cheesy, I know, and I’m very sorry!

I read somewhere (I don’t remember the exact site though) that it was common for emperors or tribal leaders to adopt a son or daughter so they could trust the next ruling to. Because either they didn’t think their own offspring was good enough or because they had a woman.

I'm a sucker for family things so after reading that, idk I thought it cute and I wanted to add it somehow.

But I do hope that the ending was sufficient for you my reader, if not...I'm sorry again :')D But I'd like to thank all of you that read this or waited for each new update. Your reblogs, likes, comments, kudos or bookmarks. I appreciate every single one and it's what kept me going enough to finish and now continue with my next work 'Feliciano and the King of Hearts'. I hope you wish to read that one as well. Really, thank you, thank you, thank you. Please don't be afraid to send me messages, just to either talk or comment in any way you want to the story.

I really hoped you enjoyed this story.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!